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WHEAT AND TARES.

by
Sir Henry Stewart Cunningham.

77

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	THE TWO FRIENDS	9
II.	AN ARRIVAL	18
III.	LOVERS' QUARRELS	24
IV.	THE ARCHDEACON'S SCHOOLS	30
V.	THE DEAN OF OLDCHURCH	47
VI.	ATTACK AND REPULSE	62
VII.	LONSDALE'S SERMON	75
VIII.	GRACE FEATHERSTONE	82
IX.	MRS. ASHE "AT HOME"	89
X.	PARTING	101
XI.	REJECTED ADDRESSES	106
XII.	SUMMER DAYS	122
XIII.	VERY SUCCESSFUL	134
XIV.	THE WESTBOROUGH BACHELORS	149
XV.	APRÈS	161
XVI.	DE PROFUNDIS	166
XVII.	CLOUD	189
XVIII.	STORM	195
XIX.	RACHEL'S SORROW	198
XX.	THE DEAN'S DINNER	210
XXI.	AN UNLUCKY ENCOUNTER	228
XXII.	A NEW PROFESSOR	234
XXIII.	L'AMOUR EST MORT	245
XXIV.	FORTUNE'S SMILES AND FROWNS	252
XXV.	THE OLD LOVE	269

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CHAPTER I.

THE TWO FRIENDS.

PARK LANE was in an uproar, for Lady Trumpeton's balls were good, and her guests numerous; and now they were taking their departure. It was high time they should; for an hour past it had been growing disgracefully light. At every crevice the day was peeping through, making candles look dim and cheeks pale, and warning good people home to their beds. Reginald Leslie, however, and his partner, seemed in no hurry to take the hint.

By this time Mrs. Bathurst had grown very decided.

"Come, Ella, do think how dreadfully tired you will be to-morrow."

"Please, dear mamma, only just this one dance."

The last valse, like every thing else, comes to an end; Mrs. Bathurst and her daughter are safe in their carriage, and Reginald Leslie and his friend Wynne are walking home, watching the bright glow which begins to warm up along the east, and

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drinking in the delicious draught of keen morning air.

Leslie had done a good day's work, it must be confessed.

In the morning he had talked old Mr. Bathurst into allowing him to become his son-in-law. In the afternoon he had brought a very long love-making to a successful close with Ella. All night he had been dancing, flirting, fetching ices, going messages for Mrs. Bathurst, and saying all the absurd things that people in his position are apt to indulge in. No wonder he was tired.

"And now," he said, "wish me joy, old fellow!"

"Well, I do," said Wynne.

"Come, come, don't sham apathetic," cried Leslie; "clap me on the back, or shake hands, or do something or other extraordinary, for goodness' sake."

"I can not possibly go into raptures," replied his companion; "*I* am not going to be married, you must recollect. However, I heartily envy you who are; who could say more?"

"Well, envy is better than nothing," said Leslie; "I think I am to be envied, certainly. But your spirits are not up to the occasion, I see. Let us talk about something else. To begin with, you are coming with us to Westborough, are you not, to tutorize Robert?"

"I'll come if he thinks I can help him, and if you're not afraid of my spoiling a family party."

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"Spoiling it!" cried Leslie; "not a bit of it; come, like a good fellow; we shall all be delighted; I am sure you will like it; it's a cheery sort of place, and there's always something or other going on. The Trumpetons are to be there, one of the young ladies told me to-night. I expect it will be rather fun, and the archdeacon and my aunt are as well worth seeing as any two curiosities in Christendom!"

"Well," answered Wynne, "and what of Robert's reading? Has he been pretty diligent?"

"I should think," said Leslie, "if you take him in hand, he might get a first. I am sure he has devotion enough to see him safe through worse martyrdoms than getting up the Ethics. He rows at Henley next week, and meanwhile is always either devouring beefsteaks, or taking galloping exercise in great-coats and comforters."

"We must get him out of condition as soon as possible," said Wynne; "your heroes in high training are always bores. If one must have an extreme, I prefer my friends flabby. However, I dare say we shall soon succeed in making him as dyspeptic and low-spirited as heart could wish."

"I'm not so sure of that," said Leslie; "it's enough to make one fanatically enthusiastic to hear you grumble; I fall downright in love with humanity, as a protest against your abuse of it. By the way, haven't you caught a client yet?"

"No," answered Wynne; "I sit and pipe all the

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most tempting melodies, and not an attorney in all London will come and dance to me."

"Ah!" said the other, "you should have been in my line: it is not very glorious, but it is fifty times more comfortable, and quite as amusing."

Leslie's "line" meant a snug berth in Mr. Bathurst's bank; for some time past he had held a sort of unacknowledged position in it, and part of the arrangement which had come about that day was that he was henceforth to receive a regular income as quasi-partner, and, after a due time of probation, to be intrusted with a rather important country branch which had lately been started, and for which no proper manager had yet been found.

"Comfortable!" cried Wynne, when he heard of it; "I should rather think it was! My dear Dives, I congratulate you: when I come and sit outside your door, mind you send me some crumbs; and, in return, when your bank breaks you shall be my marshal, and carve at my assize dinners when I'm a chief justice."

By this time they had come to Leslie's home.

"Good-night, Lazarus," he said as he went in; and Wynne, who lived at chambers, stopped a passing cab and drove off to the Temple.

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CHAPTER II.

AN ARRIVAL.

WESTBOROUGH, where the Leslies always spent the summer, was a pleasant sea-town on the south coast. Of late years it had come into fashion as a watering-place; and a new esplanade, a new grand hotel, and a great many smart new lodgings, attested its increasing popularity with the holiday-making public.

The Leslies, however, had gone there long before the world knew any thing about it. Archdeacon Ashe, the rector, had married Mrs. Leslie's sister; and that lady, who had now been a widow for some years, had been glad to come among her relations, and to accept the ardent hospitality that year after year awaited her at the Rectory. Besides, the place thoroughly suited the high spirits and activity of her children; it was brisk and well-to-do. The buzz, and clatter, and racket of the enchanted palace the moment after the *réveil* of the princess, was the normal state of things among the Westboroughites. The demon of diligence possessed them, and a wild, untiring, unexorcisable sort of spirit he was. Every body played his part with a will; the good people

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were emphatically good, and the bad people *were* bad and no mistake. On Sunday mornings the sailors lounged about in noisy disorder, and little truant boys would play pitch and toss in a defiant manner under the archdeacon's very nose; but the people who went to church went there to good purpose, and shouted the hymns so vehemently that it was only by a free use of the diapason stop that the organist could maintain his lawful ascendency. Every where vehemence was the order of the day. It would have been too much for most people's nerves; but Mrs. Ashe, the presiding genius of the place, and ruler supreme of the Rectory and its appurtenances, hadn't any nerves, and found it delightful.

She was essentially queenly: I think there must have been some Tudor blood in her. She was very small, and yet she could look quite majestic. Her profile was clearly and delicately chiseled, her eye radiant with benevolence, her mouth sincere, handsome, and commanding. Her royal nature showed itself in the way she overrode the conventionalities by which the common herd was restricted. She made a great disturbance in all social equilibria to establish her own; confounded all other harmonies by a chord peculiar to herself. Little shades and distinctions, which elsewhere assumed imposing proportions, melted before her; ceremony trudged away as she came, affectations and unrealities pulled down their colors in despair. She compelled her neighbors to be sincere in spite of themselves; had a

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ready and delicate sympathy for every shape of misfortune, and took a great deal of interest in her species at large, and still more in those members of it whose romances touched her heart, or whose anomalies aroused her curiosity.

Dr. Ashe appeared generally rather eclipsed by the superior powers of his partner. He was light-hearted, unruffled, had a quotation out of Horace for every possible emergency, and a very keen sense of the comical in men and things. His feeling toward society was rather that of Béranger's easy-going curé—

> Eh! zon, zon, zon,
> Baise-moi, Suzon;
> Et ne damnons personne.

He could not well be terrific or sublime, but he did his part manfully and conscientiously; bore with his lady's eccentricities with the patience of a martyr, admired her with the enthusiasm of a lover, played second fiddle with all the grace and good-humor imaginable, handed bread and butter at her *soirées*, took the chair at her favorite meetings, and, with the exception of an occasional playfulness as to matters which in Mrs. Ashe's judgment admitted only of the most rigid solemnity, was in every respect a pattern of what a husband should be. His eyes (and he was hardly to blame for that) would twinkle and his lips twitch when some more than ordinarily abnormal specimen found his or her way to the Rectory, or when his lady's proceedings had

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produced some unusually frightful domestic entanglement.

Yet the archdeacon had his serious side: though not very profound or enthusiastic, he was simple-hearted, honest, and unboundedly good-natured; and if the little sparkling, sunny brook of his existence sometimes was apt to loiter by its pleasant bank, the impetuous current of his companion's energy swept him along with her on occasions when action became necessary, and so the two kept pace to perfection. She was queen, he was her lord chamberlain, Westborough was her kingdom.

And a motley crew her subjects were.

The Duchess of Roehampton had a large house at the quietest end of the town. Anxious mothers like Lady Trumpeton diffused an inferior lustre from lodgings on the esplanade; there were foreign grandees, who liked living at the hotel; second-rate people, who revenged themselves for the snubbings they had got all the summer by giving themselves great airs among the Westborough fashionables; members of Parliament, who revenged themselves for the silence of the session by talking Blue-books, and looking grave about the British Constitution; stout Sir Johns, who longed to get back to their turnips and prize oxen; fine gentlemen, solemn, languid, and apparently sick at heart at the vulgarity of their species; Indian colonels with livers; broken-down clergymen with throats; chaste Penelopes doing worsted-work patiently while Ulysses was on

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his travels or at the wars; naughty Clytemnestras, with flirtations on hand and tragical *dénouements* looming in the future; Lydia and Chloe reading novels on the beach, while their pretty locks are drying after their bathe; Horace going along the esplanade to Mæcenas's lodgings with a new ode in his pocket; Dives in his barouche, with the gout in his legs, and Atra Cara up with the powdered footman behind him — any body and every body, in fact, who wanted to get some fresh air and a holiday, and who was not above taking it in a good practical, emphatic sort of fashion. As for being morbid and low-spirited at Westborough, that was simply out of the question.

The Leslies enjoyed it of all things. In due time they arrived. My curtain rises upon a family group of them, as they stood, fresh landed, in front of the Rectory, about six o'clock one fine hot morning in July. Mrs. Leslie seemed rather overpowered by her responsibilities as materfamilias; and no wonder, for they were a large party. Ella Bathurst, it had been settled, should come with them to Westborough for a week before she joined her mother for a round of summer visits; Robert, the Oxford brother, had arrived from St. Benedict's, and Wynne had come with them; Rachel, the eldest daughter, was standing guardian over the younger children, who were far too excited to be kept in any thing like order; on one side were a number of maids, intrenched behind barriers of luggage, and two Eton

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boys devoting themselves to sundry bundles of bats and fishing-rods; on the other a group of sailors, some of whom had rowed the party ashore, and whose pay for so doing was now the subject of dispute; and finally, as the central and most important figure in the scene, there was the archdeacon. His appearance bordered on the grotesque, for the steamer had arrived somewhat sooner than usual, and the archdeacon, who was ensconced in the library, busy with a cup of chocolate and the composition of his next Sunday's sermon, had rushed out to welcome the new-comers in his morning attire of dressing-gown and slippers. After the first greetings, he plunged ardently into the controversy.

"Fifteen shillings for coming ashore! Monstrous, monstrous! Now, my men," he cried, assuming the tone of the most emphatic resolution, and making a signally unsuccessful attempt to look fierce, "this is just one of those things I will not have. It's atrocious!"

The archdeacon paused in his impetuous career, and looked around to see if any one would have the temerity to reply.

His audience gave no signs of repentance, and looked uncommonly stubborn.

"It's a disgrace," continued the orator; "a disgrace—foolish, wicked—"

"Just look at that luggage, sir," said the foremost sailor, pointing to the pile of boxes.

"Ah!" said the archdeacon, "that's a considera-

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tion; there is an enormous amount of luggage, certainly. But fifteen shillings! and you, too, Ned Cook, who were the best boy in my school, and who have the best little girl in the whole parish—why, I blush for you."

Ned Cook blushed for himself.

"We've had to carry it up from the shore," he said, in an apologetic tone, as he took off his cap and wiped his hot brow.

The archdeacon began to relent.

"What's fifteen shillings between all of us, sir," asked another, "and my wife ill at home?"

"Your wife ill, Wilson?" cried the archdeacon, whose wrath had now quite evaporated. "Poor thing, poor thing! it is this hot weather. I shall come and see her this afternoon, and bring her some more grapes. Dear, dear, ill again. I'm really very sorry to hear it, Wilson. I think," he said, turning to the butler, "they may have fifteen shillings this once, as there is so much luggage; and I should like some beer to be sent up for them, as it is such an uncommonly hot morning—uncommonly hot indeed, and only twenty minutes past six: what weather! Poor Mrs. Wilson!"

* * * * * * *

Two hours later, and the bustle of the arrival was over, and the party safely established at breakfast; and breakfast was a very important meal at the Rectory. I know it will be set down to partiality, deceptive memory, and so forth, but still I can not

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help recording here my firm conviction that there never were any red herrings, or brown loaves, or fresh eggs at all comparable to those which used to find their way to Mrs. Ashe's breakfast-table. At any rate, all the party seemed to think so on the present occasion. Mrs. Ashe was at one end, and made tea with monarchical dignity; the archdeacon was at the other, making himself exceedingly merry with the children, and cutting jokes and bread and butter with a rapidity that showed the morning's controversy had not in the least exhausted his faculties.

"Well, Rachel, dear, and how did you get through the voyage?" Mrs. Ashe asked.

"Oh, Rachel did capitally," said Reginald, on whose appetite the sea air seemed already to have worked wonders. "She and Mr. Wynne discussed morals all the evening, in spite of our reiterated proclamation of 'No metaphysics abaft the funnel.'"

"Don't talk nonsense," said the young lady in question. "You have no idea, aunt, what a tease Rex has grown; he plagues us all out of our lives."

"I hope he took good care of you all, at any rate, and managed the luggage and tickets cleverly."

"No, indeed," said Rachel; "poor Robert had to do it all, and was worked nearly to death. Rex is the worst courier possible."

"You forget," replied Rex, "that my attention was necessarily directed to a focus. Miss Bathurst

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has really so many dressing-cases and leather bags, that it's as much as one intellect can bear to keep them all in mind at once."

"For shame, Reginald!" cried Ella; "why, if it hadn't been for Jeannette, my things would all have gone by the mail to Boulogne; wouldn't they? No, no, you can not be trusted."

"Ingratitude!" said Rex; "was I not at that very moment telling you those beautiful lines about the 'sail that sinks with all we love beneath the verge?' What's luggage at such a moment?"

"It's a great deal more important than poetry, I'm sure," said Ella; "it was all laziness."

"Wynne was just as bad," put in Robert; "and he had no excuse."

"Oh!" said Rex, "he had his hands full, trying to understand Rachel's philosophy: one can't do two things at once."

"Georgie," said Rachel to one of the boys, "go and pinch Rex. I commission you."

"That's right, Rachel, don't be bullied," cried Robert, who, though very good friends with Reginald, had not quite shaken off the profound respect which younger brothers feel for elder, and was glad to see any body stand up to Reginald, that gentleman being somewhat tyrannically disposed, and so christened Rex.

"That's the best of Rachel," Rex cried, as he paused in his inroad on the shrimps to ward off Master Georgie's attacks; "she is a most formidable

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antagonist indeed, and sure of a victory one way or another. You knock her over with a syllogism, and she retaliates with a pinch, and annihilates your argument by menacing your personal security."

"Like Alexander," said Wynne, "the conquests of a single hemisphere are insufficient for so extensive a genius. That's it; is it not, Miss Leslie?"

"Indeed, I think you are very base," she said, "to join Reginald against me. Is he not, aunt, thoroughly base and unchivalrous?"

"If you come to chivalry," said Rex, "that has been dead these fifty years. Burke wrote its epitaph."

"A worthy confession!" said Robert, who was constantly firing up at Reginald's speeches. "For my part, I think, while ladies are beautiful" (this with a little bow to Miss Bathurst, as he handed her her cup), "their knights should be just as devoted as ever."

"Well, then, Don Quixote," cried Rex, as he pointed to one of the children's plates, "just draw your valorous sword, and cut your dulcinea here a slice of bread and butter; and please, aunt, give me some jam."

"To reward my little nephew for being good on the voyage," said Mrs. Ashe; "I don't think I shall give you any. You are too old for good things, Reginald."

"Reginald retains all his juvenile tastes," said

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Rachel, as she helped him, "even down to teasing—"

"And being fond of his sisters," added Reginald; "isn't it sad?"

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CHAPTER III.

LOVERS' QUARRELS.

REGINALD'S engagement to Miss Bathurst had been his mother's pet scheme; she looked upon it as the welcome close of a long and troublesome series of efforts on her part to get and keep him out of scrapes, into which he had an unfortunate knack of falling. The task of extricating him had constantly fallen upon her, and a very heart-wearing and perplexing process she had found it. His life was a wild one; she knew it only too well. It had been her torture for years past, and now it was all to end; the prodigal was to come home and be good: Reginald was to marry and settle, and be always a comfort and pleasure. Every thing promised brightly. Ella was, on the whole, a nice girl, and would improve. If she was rather too much engrossed with the trifles of life just now, that would pass away as she sobered down. She was not very clever, certainly, but good-humored and affectionate; and Mrs. Leslie felt grateful to her for having won Reginald. She was an old flame of his. A long ballroom flirtation had gradually ripened into an ardent, though not very elevated attachment on her part, and an easy-going, good-

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natured fondness on his. She was an only daughter of rather rich people, and Reginald Leslie would no doubt be thought to have made a good match. Till now his unsettled condition had always proved an insuperable objection; of late, however, he had been doing better, and now that he had an immediate object, and a definite plan of life, and something to shake him out of his former careless selfishness, his mother dared to hope for all sorts of farther improvements. The announcement had taken a load off her mind, and Rex was considered to have somewhat atoned for his past misdemeanors and idleness by providing for himself in so satisfactory a manner.

The one of the party who heard of his intention with the least satisfaction was Rachel. Ella was her friend; but she did not relish the idea of her as a sister-in-law. Rex might have done better, she thought; might have found some one who would do him some good, rouse his ambition, and fix his principle, whereas Ella simply doted on him, and believed in her foolish heart that he was all perfection. However, like a good sister, she had given in the moment she saw his resolution taken, concealed her disappointment, and set herself vehemently to grow fond of her destined relation. And yet she did not succeed as well as she hoped. Ella's ways of thinking about things were so strange: Rachel found talking to her and living with her rather an effort. Their characters were

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as different as their modes of life. Rachel was impetuous, daring, high-spirited, large-hearted. Ella's good-humor was politic and shrewd, and her love selfish and suspicious; Rachel was unawed by conventionalities; Ella surrendered to Fashion unconditionally. Rachel had been into society very little, and then for amusement; Ella a great deal, and as a grave matter of business.

There was another thing which made it hard for them to be friends. Rachel was her brother's especial favorite; he had loved and admired her so much that she could do with him what no one else could. He knew how generous and sympathizing she was, and so she possessed a great influence over his wild, passionate, wayward nature. He had no very keen sense of shame except for her. He rather enjoyed scandalizing prim people. They abused him, and magnified his offenses, and he took no pains to undeceive them. If they liked to look at his worst side, there it was, and welcome for every body; but with Rachel he would do any thing to set himself right. One year, at her persuasion, he had not made a single bet, except a very innocent transaction at Ascot, which had resulted in a large addition to Ella's stock of gloves. Sometimes she would coax him to come home on Sunday, and once even made him go with her to a famous preacher on the other side of the river. As to this, however, Reginald had said that the line must be drawn somewhere, and this stretch of authority

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had never been ventured on again. And now her empire was at an end; and was her successor worthy? Perhaps it was the suspicion that she was not that quickened Ella's jealousy. At any rate, it was always ready to burst out. Life was a grand husband-hunt; she had bagged Reginald; he was hers, and she guarded her prey, her darling prey, with a feline watchfulness; she could not help feeling that there was a region of thought, where the brother and sister met and sympathized, into which she was incapable of entering. There were jokes between them of which she could not see the point; ready expressions of assent, that showed their minds were exactly attuned; sentiments, which to them were common property, in which she had no share. It made her mad against Rachel even to think of it. Should the handsome, clever sister invade the wife's monopoly? Never! Ella secretly prepared for war; the very first morning at Westborough there was a declaration of hostilities. Reginald and his sister were alone in the drawing-room. He was looking over the Westborough paper.

"I wish," he said, "there was going to be a ball, or regatta, or something this week, while she is with us. I'm so afraid she will be dull."

"Dull?" asked Rachel, looking up perplexed; "dull at Westborough, with all of us to amuse her, and the sea to look at, and you to make love to her? Dear me!"

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"You see she is so used to London life, and being entertained and excited, and it is rather quiet here, is it not?"

"Well," said Rachel, "let us have a grand sail, with luncheon on the sands at Lanton Reach."

"Or a picnic," said Reginald, "at the old place in the wood. Get all the party to drive over there, and find an elegant repast spread in the shade. I'll contrive it."

"Capital," said Rachel. "Uncle and I will ride, the boys can go on with the provisions, and aunt, mother, Ella, and you shall go in the carriage. You need not be afraid about driving back in the evening. You can have the hood, you know."

"Whose hood?" said Ella, who came into the room at the moment, and saw that the conversation came to a sudden pause. "Whose hood is the secret about?"

"Little Bo-peep's," said Reginald, with a laugh. Ella turned quite red, and walked away to the window. Rex ran after her, and found her eyes full of tears. He took her hand; it lay sullenly in his. "My darling, what is it?" he whispered.

"Always secrets," answered Ella; "mysteries with every body but me. I ought to know, Rex. Whose hood was it? was it my white one?"

Reginald burst out laughing. Ella got more and more provoked; her latent animosity burst out.

"It's a shame, Reginald, you tell things to Rachel you will not tell me; you are confidential with her

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about me; you criticise me with her, I know; I dare say she laughs at me. She comes between you and me always."

Rachel jumped up and swept out of the room as stately as a tragedy queen. Reginald was thoroughly roused; he dropped Ella's hand.

"Ella," he said, "you may scold me as much as you please, but don't say a word against Rachel; she is the noblest, most generous creature in the world, and you must love her as much as I do."

"Love her!" exclaimed Ella, through her tears; "love her! when she shares your love, which is mine, and your secrets, which are mine too! Love her! when you talk to her and stop when I come into the room?"

"What a little darling absurd creature it is," said Rex, melted by her earnestness, and taking her hand again; "why, there's no mystery except about a luncheon in the woods we were going to surprise you with; and the hood belongs neither to you nor to Little Bo-peep, but to uncle Ashe's pony phaeton, in which I'm going to drive you down to the beach presently; so now we'll make it up, and you'll go and beg Rachel's pardon, like a good little angel, won't you?"

"Yes; but no more secrets, Rex."

"Not about hoods, at any rate," said Leslie; and Ella dried up her tears, and presently went off to make peace with her fancied rival.

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CHAPTER IV.

THE ARCHDEACON'S SCHOOLS.

REGINALD LESLIE might well admire his sister. She was a young lady of the magnificent order. Nature designed her on a grand scale, and she had a natural affinity for grandeur in things and people around her. Her appearance was imposing. She fell naturally into dignified statuesque attitudes. Her most careless movement had a certain stateliness; she drew up her long neck, and darted a flash from her great vehement eyes, and one bowed before her. She wore very fine clothes, but they never in the least eclipsed her; she seemed to take them as a matter of course, just as the appropriate accessory to her beauty. Then she was rather lavish in her tastes, and conducted her financial transactions with so lordly a defiance of arithmetic and economy, that Mrs. Leslie had often to come to the rescue, and Rachel's account-book was known to be one of the most impetuous and irregular pieces of literature in existence.

And as she chose grand things, so she preferred remarkable people. A field-marshal was far more to her taste than an unfledged cornet, a bishop than a curate, a statesman than a country squire; but,

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above every thing, she hated to be bored. When people prosed to her, or were affected, or stupid, or solemn, she used to toss her head and look so refractory, and give such profound sighs, and stare about her with such a wild glare, that her persecutors did not often venture to repeat the experiment. The end of society she considered to be amusement, and amused she determined to be, and woe to any one who tried to defraud her of her natural right. Guided by this principle, and never having yet seen the man whom she could fancy being in love with, she took a very lenient view of flirting; if people entertained one another, why in the world should they be frightened out of each other's company? If Captain Bluefire and Miss Rosemary preferred standing out on the balcony and looking at the stars to coming inside and dancing stupid quadrilles, why not? She liked doing it herself, provided it were sufficiently sublime or eccentric, with an archbishop or an embassador, or a soldier who had seen a great deal of service and was not too handsome to make himself agreeable, or an Italian refugee suspected of regicide tendencies; any body, in fact, who was not commonplace and fatiguing.

That was one side of her character; another was that she had an infinite fund of the noblest, most womanly tenderness for whatever excited her compassion, and a ready supply of the warmest indignation for whatever appealed to her sense of justice.

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She had her pets—gentle natures, or abashed, who were wrongly despised or unjustly treated, or who were in trouble, or disgraced, and so wanted a good ally. She protected them with the jealousy and fondness of a nursing lioness; she would have done battle for them against the world, and found it a relief, because any thing like injustice to others made her furious; she could not bear the idea of it, try how she would. I have seen her fine nostril dilate and her lip quiver, and the passionate tears spring into her eyes, at the bare mention of some piece of unfairness or tyranny which less ardent people acquiesced in contentedly.

Her summer pet was the archdeacon. It sounds irreverent, but it is a fact, and Dr. Ashe concurred in the relationship with the most complete contentment. All the chivalry of his nature was roused by her presence. They showed each other off to great advantage. He was so courtly in his politeness: she was so grand and tender. Rachel rode almost every day, and he was always her cavalier. The archdeacon enjoyed it immensely, but what his pony thought of it is quite another thing. It was accustomed to go pleasantly ambling down the street, stopping here and there while its master had a chat and heard the news, or waiting outside a cottage while he paid a visit. Now that sort of thing Rachel could not stand, nor could Rachel's horse (Rachel, I believe, taught it to fidget whenever the archdeacon showed symptoms of stopping);

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and when it came to a good hearty canter over the downs, the pony's short legs stood no chance against the long, easy stride of its nobler companion, and the archdeacon used to declare it would be fairly galloped out of existence before the end of the summer.

This morning, however, there was to be no ride, for the archdeacon had got Mrs. Leslie and Rachel to come with him and see his schools. This was the department of parish matters in which the archdeacon came out strongest. He was uncommonly fond of children, and piqued himself not a little on his powers of getting on with them—on his knowledge of their likes and dislikes, and his general acquaintance with nursery mysteries. He liked to stop the nurses on the beach, and make knowing remarks on the teeth and complexions of their charges; he would, with the utmost serenity, allow his legs to be built into sand-embankments, and the number of mugs he gave away during the summer months, with a picture of Westborough on one side and a gilt Christian name on the other, formed quite a serious item in the Rectory expenses. He was the very reverse of scornful, yet it was all he could do not to feel a dash of contempt for the clumsy way his curate Lonsdale handled the infants at christenings, making them screech horribly, whereas with him they invariably submitted to that ceremony with the most complete good-humor. The character of his mind made children exactly the

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pleasantest companions to him; he delighted in their easy, unconscious, effortless condition; he liked their goodness all the better for being more innocence than resolution, and their laughter, that it arose more from the height of their spirits than from the excellence of his jokes. In the infant-school he was a much greater favorite than his lady, whose decisive and imperious disposition and prompt manner rather alarmed the little creatures; but it was quite another thing with the archdeacon: his advent, I am sorry to say, was a signal for rather a relaxation of discipline than otherwise. Tommy saw him come in, and took the opportunity of giving Jemmy the pinch he had been longing all the morning to inflict. Jack, unawed, at once set to work upon the apple for which his mouth had been watering the last two hours; while Molly and Betty, without more ado, produced their dolls, and compared notes on the excellences of their respective physiognomies; every one felt that it would be quite out of place to be too rigid in his presence; and as he moved through the rooms, he seemed to diffuse a pleasant little sunny atmosphere of good-humored disorder around him. The babies used to come to him to be petted, and to play with his shovel-hat, with entire familiarity and unconcern. As a matter of fact, it was only Lonsdale's assiduous care that prevented the archdeacon's visits being downright fatal to all maintenance of authority. Dr. Ashe, however, had not the slightest idea that such

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was the case, and imagined that his continual supervision was quite essential to keep every thing properly going. Accordingly, he used to take his visitors there in triumph; and Mrs. Leslie always knew that one of her first duties after arrival would be to be thoroughly lionized over the whole educational apparatus for which Westborough was justly celebrated. The archdeacon believed it one of the wonders of the age.

"I hope I am sufficiently grateful," he said, on their way there; "I certainly ought to be a happy rector. I have the most admirable curate, and the nicest children, and best-informed schoolmistress, I do believe, in the whole diocese, to say nothing of the most charming niece either in the diocese or out of it. Eh, Miss Rachel?"

That young lady, who was leaning on his arm, said, "Yes, of course he ought to be grateful; but she did not see why she should come last in his list of blessings."

"At any rate, you're not quite such a large blessing as this one," cried the archdeacon, as he opened the door, and disclosed the huge bank of infantile faces rising one above another, all alive with inquisitiveness at the appearance of their visitors, and the pleasing consciousness of there being some fun in store for them. And now the archdeacon was in his glory.

"This is a very naughty little girl," he says, as he taps the glowing cheek of one of his pets, who

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stands before them, the very ideal of modesty and goodness; "she does not take care of her old grandmother at all, and isn't kind to her little brothers and sisters, and comes late to school, and doesn't learn her hymns nicely. It's very shocking, isn't it? What must we do about it, little woman?"

The little blushing paragon has no suggestion to offer; and so the archdeacon passes on, quite elate at such a triumph of human excellence.

"Would you like to ask the children a question? Do ask, Mrs. Leslie, for some information. Don't you want to know where Joppa is, or Buenos Ayres? or how long it would take the 'Quicksilver Mail,' all four horses at full gallop, to catch up Giles's wagon that never goes out of a walk? or what a hundred miles of red tape, at 2½*d.* a yard, would cost? Now's your time; they can tell you; depend upon it, they know as well as possible, they are such excellent children."

Mrs. Leslie, however, is quite content to take their acquirements on trust, and Rachel would like to hear them sing; and so they all stand up at a given signal, a feat which excites the archdeacon's admiration quite as much as the most complicated military manœuvre could have done; and then begins a catch, soft and regular, with a set of new voices chiming in here and there, and taking one another up in the cleverest way imaginable. This was almost too much for the archdeacon: he beat time with his stick, and nodded approval at each turn of

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the tune, and looked alternately at the children and Mrs. Leslie, and then glanced from Mrs. Leslie to Rachel, and then back from Rachel to the children again, with such a radiant eye, with such a charming smile of content and admiration, as must have done all the children's hearts good to look at, and have given any gloomy or morose feelings that might be lurking in any of them instantaneous notice to quit, in the most peremptory and emphatic manner in the world. As they went home the archdeacon's simple-hearted satisfaction and complete contentment with the morning's performance were downright pathetic. In the fullness of his heart he could not help letting Mrs. Leslie and Rachel into the secret of a little controversy he had had with his lady, and of his scheme with reference to it, which he looked upon as a masterpiece of diplomacy, and, indeed, was half frightened at the enormous ingenuity in deception which it seemed to him to involve. Nearly opposite the Rectory stood a Roman Catholic school, which was the thorn in the rose of Mrs. Ashe's existence. A grown-up Papist was bad enough; there, however, the evil had reached its culminating point; but to see all these little creatures being hourly farther initiated into the mysteries of Babylon, constantly growing more and more heretical, coming away each evening with a fresh supply of deadly error for home consumption, and all this, too, within fifty yards of the Rectory door, was more than Mrs. Ashe's equanimity was proof

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against. She could not be good-natured when she thought of it. Her benevolent little face used to screw itself up into a most unnatural sternness whenever she met the children coming up the street with their books (such books, too!) under their arms; and I believe she lived in constant apprehension that their wicked little wits were busily hatching some diabolical plot from over the way, which would some time or other result in the simultaneous annihilation of the Rectory, her husband, and the Protestant faith. As bad luck would have it, the archdeacon never could resist the children. He used to stand at the Rectory door as they passed by, and chat with them, and ask them about their mothers, and chuck them under the chin, and stroke their heads, just as kindly as if an unruly monk had never fallen foul of indulgences, and Henry the Eighth's successors had remained, in good truth, *Defensores Fidei*, and obedient servants of the Church to this very day. When the lady's back was turned, he used to spread surreptitious slices of bread and jam, and pretend to himself that he was not nervous lest she should come back and catch him in *flagrante delicto* of indulging some little heretic's taste for sweet things.

"My dearest love," he used to say, "I conceive the love of jam to be a principle of our nature antecedent to any theological dogma. I assure you they devour it with just as much gusto as though they said the Church Catechism, and heard me preach every Sunday of their lives!"

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Mrs. Ashe wished they did, and remained stern and unconvinced.

One of his chief pets was little Pierre, the son of a French widow who kept a *blanchisserie*, and made a living by "getting up" the smart cuffs and frills of the Westborough ladies; and when, one morning, in the Rectory hall, after some unusual piece of kindness, the child went down on his knees for his blessing, and said, "Mon père, priez le bon Dieu pour moi," the archdeacon was fairly upset, promised he would, with all his heart, and I have not the least doubt remembered it that very night in his prayers. It was about these offending children that the archdeacon had laid his plot, and the plot involves a story.

For some years past, some good-natured people had set on foot a grand children's picnic to Lanton Reach, a pretty bay about twelve miles along the shore, which was one of the most famous Westborough lions. There was a grand cliff, with mysterious caves (pirates, of course) for those who liked exploring, and ruins of an old castle for those disposed to antiquities, and for the pupil teachers to improve their minds by taking a note of—there was a down, so deliciously smooth and turfy that it made one's fingers itch to play cricket upon it—there were woods so thick with hazels that many a Westborough boy before now had found the temptation too strong for him, and had spent long, delicious, truant afternoons nut-gathering in their close-grown copses,

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undaunted by the awful certainty of the to-morrow's birching — there were great jocund-looking elms, that stuck down their scraggy rambling boughs so admirably for swings, that you would have sworn that they considered children's *fêtes* the great final end of their existence, and that the dismal idea of being cut down and sawn into coffin-planks never once crossed their benevolent fancies; and, finally, it was well-known that on these occasions, by some fortunate piece of jugglery, somehow or other the most capital tents in the world sprung up on the side of a pleasant stream, and tables spread themselves with rounds of beef so enormous, and fresh and juicy, that it was all nonsense to pretend one didn't feel greedy about them, because one did; and plum tarts so irresistible that, though one had surprised one's self at the beef, one's appetite plucked up as one went on; and the more one ate, the hungrier one got — in fact, it was an elysium, as any child in Westborough would have told you without a moment's hesitation, and the only puzzle was how to get there. This year, moreover, an unusual complication had arisen. Why, it was said, might not the British school come? Why should not the poor little Wesleyan Methodists have a swing and some tart, like the rest?

"Why, indeed?" exclaimed the archdeacon, looking up from his paper, quite indignant at the bare idea of such bigotry, and rallying his powers for an oration. "All the children, bless their hearts!

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—every individual child should go, he was resolved."

"Every individual child, dearest?" said his lady, looking suspiciously in the direction of the Catholic school.

"Every individual child!" rejoined the archdeacon, with as much emphasis as though an empire depended on each word.

"Except, of course, the objectionable ones?"

The archdeacon laid down his paper, took his eyeglass off his nose, and looked at Mrs. Ashe in mute perplexity.

"Objectionable ones?" he said.

"Those miserable little Papists!" answered his lady, with a sepulchral groan, as if in her mind's eye she beheld all the fires of Smithfield blazing again, and Cardinal Wiseman in the act of thumb-screwing her lord and master into acknowledging the Immaculate Conception. Happily at this moment the door opened, and a servant announced Mr. Lonsdale, who was forthwith initiated into the subject under discussion.

Lonsdale was a scrupulous man, and, if he could, staved off the decision of a nice question of principle.

"Perhaps," he suggested, "the priest will not allow the children to come, even if they are invited."

"Of course he won't," exclaimed Mrs. Ashe in triumph; "how could he?"

"Unfortunately," said the archdeacon, "he met

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Rachel in a cottage only yesterday, and told her how much he wished it could be managed."

"Thursday week will be St. Preposterus' day, and the children will have to be at service," continued the objector.

"St. Preposterus!" muttered Mrs. Ashe, with mingled pity and disdain in her tone, while the archdeacon looked comically out at the sides of his eyes at his two companions in the controversy.

"I'm afraid," said Mrs. Ashe, going to the almanac, "that St. Preposterus' day is Tuesday. Look here."

There it was, plain enough—Tuesday, in red letters.

Lonsdale had one more suggestion: "Every van in the place will be occupied with our own children; the Methodists have secured the dray from the Westborough Arms, and the British school has got the refusal of the Angel omnibus; the Roman Catholic children can be taken only at some considerable expense."

"If it comes to a question of expense," cried the archdeacon, "I shall—"

"My dearest!" said his lady, imploringly.

"If it comes to a question of expense, love," the archdeacon repeated, with immense presence of mind, changing the drift of his sentence, "I should think that it is quite certain the Roman Catholics will find funds from some quarter or other."

"There are no gentry," said Lonsdale, "and the

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priest, I am sure, has not a spare sixpence, and, I fear, often fasts from other reasons than the rules of his church."

"You don't mean to say so," cried the archdeacon, with a look of the greatest dismay. "Bless me! we must have him to dinner. Not a spare sixpence!"

"Perhaps," said Lonsdale, "that would be a good footing to leave the matter upon. If they can come they may."

"Excellent," cried the archdeaconess; "and they can't."

"So be it," said the archdeacon, and the discussion came to an end.

But not so the archdeacon's meditations. The poor fêteless children haunted him; little Pierre gave him no peace at night; the priest came and sung hungry miserere-mei's in his ear while he took his after-dinner nap. He could not get it off his mind, and meanwhile relieved himself by presenting the objects of his compassion with pieces of bread and jam spread so enormously thick that his good lady would stand it no longer, and locked up the jam-pot along with the tea and sugar directly breakfast was over.

The archdeacon was in despair.

In the midst of his trouble an unexpected succor presented itself, and it was about this that we left the archdeacon in the act of being so communicative to his companions on their way home from the schools.

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The grand hotel was just now the abode of royalty. Its grandest suite of rooms was occupied by a Russian princess, whose immense riches, splendid carriages, and strange-looking attendants formed the most striking feature in Westborough existence. Her husband was absent — exiled, rumor said, to Siberia; but his partner seemed to submit to the privation with most creditable fortitude, and wore such beautiful dresses, and looked so extremely good-natured and imposing, and gave such very entertaining parties to all sorts of people, that she was undeniably the great "fact" of the summer; and the *Westborough Gazette* chronicled her movements with a minuteness and emphasis that threw all the rest of the fashionable intelligence into the shade. The good lady herself played her part admirably; she was perfectly accustomed to attract attention, and set about the task of dazzling the world with a sort of good-humored vigor that insured complete success. Her purse was bottomless, and, what was more to the purpose, always open. She subscribed right and left with promiscuous generosity to the band, to the assembly rooms, to the Public Works Committee, to the Arts Association, to the Westborough Nice Young Men's Association, to the New Jerusalem Chapel; and, not content with this, she sent one of her gentlemen to the archdeacon, and asked him to point out some other ways in which she might charitably get rid of a little more of her wealth.

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"Did I do wrong, Rachel," said the archdeacon, "do you think I did wrong in telling her about the Roman Catholic schools, and the picnic, and the trouble about the vans? The princess is a Catholic—I trust, a devout Catholic; at any rate, Greek Church, which comes to much the same. Would it have been right or honest for me not to tell her? Those poor dear little children—bless me! It would have been monstrous, quite monstrous, not to tell her; I wouldn't have taken a thousand pounds not to have told her; and yet your dear aunt, I am afraid, will not be quite pleased."

"Aunt does not much like the princess already, I think," said Rachel; "she has heard that she plays at ombre, and gives parties on Sunday evenings."

"Those, I have no doubt, are Russian customs," said the archdeacon, who was never at a loss for a charitable suggestion—"Russian customs, and very bad ones too. Well, I must talk to your aunt about it quietly by-and-by; I hope it won't vex her—I do trust it won't vex her. Just do look here!"

And, as they came near the Rectory door, out burst the Catholic school, not one of all the merry faces but looked all the merrier for seeing the archdeacon; such smiles, such a pulling of forelocks by the boys, such courtesies from the girls, such a kind bow from the poor, meagre, hard-worked priest who followed them out—there never was any thing

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like it. The archdeacon looked after them with tears in his eyes. "Yes," he said to himself, "thank God, I told her!" and I have no doubt he submitted that evening to a little curtain lecture from his lady on the subject with all the resignation and good-will in the world.

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CHAPTER V.

THE DEAN OF OLDCHURCH.

THE cathedral city of Oldchurch was but an easy morning's journey from Westborough, and during the summer a great many of the Oldchurch residents were delighted to abandon their sombre closes, narrow passages, and deserted streets, for the brisk sea-town, and to forget for a while the monotony of a theological existence amid sights and sounds of a more mundane and animating description. No one was a more constant visitor than the dean, who, though a very busy man, was forever contriving to slip over for a day or two in some interval of work, and often used to make his appearance at the Rectory, where he was always sure of a welcome, and probably fell in with something or somebody that interested him. Our party had hardly been there a week before Reginald and Wynne, coming in late to luncheon, found him established by Mrs. Ashe's side, talking away at a great rate, and making himself as agreeable as need be.

He was decidedly a handsome man; his manners were easy, cheerful, and dignified; a fine, strong, open forehead gave his face a look of grandeur;

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but his eye was vigilant, and his mouth sometimes worked with a sort of nervous involuntary play that puzzled one as to its owner's intentions; at other times his firm set lips wore a look of resolution and preparedness, and, on the whole, suggested a triumphant consciousness of being inscrutable.

And inscrutable the dean certainly was. Now his mock solemn air gave the impression of a man who believed at bottom that every thing was a joke, and was taking the greatest pains to quash so inconvenient a conviction. A few minutes more convinced you that he was all sincerity. You looked again, and were more in the dark than ever. When you had been with him a day, you gave him up in despair. The dean was more than met the eye. His bland manner covered a decision that verged into stubbornness, and his deferential language a sarcasm which could soon become insolent. He talked now affably to the whole table, now in whispers to his next-door neighbor, of whom he always seemed to be making a partisan. If he said "What a fine day it is," his manner suggested that the rest of the company, *les imbécilles*, were very indifferent judges of weather; and he helped you to chicken with a mysterious air, as if there was a tacit understanding between you two that you should have the liver wing, and that gizzards were quite good enough for such excruciating bores as Mrs. Gabble on his other side, or that intolerable old Sir Fumble Fogy, who sat opposite. When thus confidential

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he grew rather oppressive; the whisper sank lower and lower, and the great eyes came peering into yours, as if in another moment his feelings would be too much for him, and he would be forced to embrace you. I am myself fond of kissing, but I own I have never regretted that national habits of reserve rendered an interchange of such endearments between the dean and myself out of the question.

Conscious of great abilities, exquisitely sensitive to the opinion of others, vexed and hampered by the stupidity of those with whom he had to deal, enterprising in conception and vigorous in action, he had swept like a comet into the placid hemisphere of Oldchurch life, and had rather eclipsed and disturbed the less brilliant luminaries whom he found there performing their old-fashioned gyrations. The authorities were sorely puzzled at his manœuvres. He courted and flattered, and bullied and snubbed them by turns. The bishop found him a thorn in his side, and began to think seriously of resigning his post; the very vergers saw that he meant mischief, and viewed him with distrustful eyes over their silver pokers, as if they expected him to bite or kick. The whole chapter were puzzled and panic-stricken; the precentor could not take his eyes off him while he was singing the service; and as for the archdeacon, one day, after staring at him all through two collects, as he knelt, meek and ineffably demure, in his canopied

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seat, that divine, who always had an eye to the ludicrous, was observed to put his head down on his book and to chuckle audibly. One of the singing-men heard him, and whispered it to me, and I tell you in the strictest confidence. We will hope he was forgiven, for really and truly the dean was a joke that tickled the archdeacon's fancy amazingly.

The fact was, the dean was a man resolved to succeed; for success he had made enormous sacrifices, and, among other things, he had sacrificed his intellect—at least its higher and nobler part. Gifted with unusual subtlety of mind, with a clear perception, with a masterly understanding, he had deliberately shirked the great difficulties of life; and who shall say that he was not wise? He had resolved on action; he meant to win in the race; and he threw away every impediment, girded up his loins, and ran like a man. On the dangerous region of thought he turned his back; the fascination of the sirens who played tunes to him on each side of the direct path could not tempt him astray into the mysterious enchanted region in which less prudent spirits were wandering. Their falls were warnings to him to keep his way straight on. If they chose to play with fire, that was no reason why he should burn his fingers. If they jumped upon their hobby-horses, and went scurrying across country, and tumbled into bogs and ditches, and at last broke their necks, he was not going to leave

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the safe beaten track of orthodoxy, with the lamps and mile-stones, good paving, and comfortable inns. If they chose to pick apples off all sorts of forbidden trees of knowledge, no wonder they were ill; he ate the rice pudding of conventionalism, and was thankful. When he was young, and his grandmother gave him and his brothers and sisters thirty-nine pills apiece all round, by way of keeping their systems straight, some of the young people were refractory, made wry faces, and had such a quarrel with grandmamma as could never afterward be thoroughly made up. Our young friend was not such a goose as that. On the contrary, he popped all thirty-nine down with the greatest goodwill, and would have dispatched thirty-nine more if that venerable lady had required it. He protested he liked them, though one of his sisters used to say that he stuffed several of the biggest into his sleeve, and afterward played at marbles with them up in his bedroom, shot them through his peashooter, and applied them to other jocose and irreverent purposes. That, however, is obviously mere malice. Be that as it may, the dean was an intellectual conservative: he took up the defense of existing systems against all comers: "the powers that be" found him an able and willing auxiliary. Nothing appealed to his sympathies or commanded his respect but what was safely ensconced in formulas and creeds: he was a dogmatist at heart, but, like a well-disposed, thoroughly civilized dogmatist

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as-he was, he consented never to press matters inconveniently. So far from taking the bull by the horns, he got up slyly by its side (like Mr. Rarey with a vicious horse), and fondled its neck, and patted its glossy skin, and showed that in some lights, pretty creature! it hadn't any horns. Like a famous gentleman of the last generation, if his friends chose to go on to Slough, he stopped at Hounslow, but so far was delighted to go arm-in-arm with them, wished them good-by with the greatest sincerity, and hoped fervently they might get safe to their journey's end. As the French poet says about the growth of truth, it is the mad folk who have had the most to do with it.

Combien du temps une pensée
Vierge obscure, attend son époux,
Les sots la traîtent d'insensée,
Le sage lui dit; "cachez vous"—
Mais la rencontrant loin du monde
Un fou, qui croit au lendemain,
L'épouse: elle devient féconde
Pour le bonheur du genre humain.

The dean, whose belief in the to-morrows of his species was not distressingly intense, decidedly preferred the comforts of bachelorhood to any such indiscreet alliances, and all the unmated truths in the world might have lived and died old maids without his getting near a proposal. He just flirted a little with the least eccentric of them; and I dare say squeezed their hands when no one was looking, and so forth; but marriage? not he. The result

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of all this was that the dean was remarkable rather for cleverness of expression than for originality of idea. He picked his way *siccissimis pedibus* through the miry paths of quarrels and difficulties. He was a perfect master of language. Dexterity was his great characteristic. He played with all sorts of theological edged tools, and never cut himself. He juggled with controversial questions, and tossed them about, and swallowed them, and balanced them, and spun them, till it made you dizzy to look at him. He could dance a sword-dance in and out among all the deadly heresies, and not touch them, till you would think his toes were bewitched; he enunciated commonplaces with all the dignified importance of an original discoverer, ornamented platitudes with brilliant scholarship, and pointed them with ingenious illustrations, till their oldest friends might have passed them without knowing it; made light of awkward matters that were the terror of less agile preachers, parried logical embarrassments by rhetorical clevernesses, got rid of a difficulty by an antithesis, and explained the inexplicable in sentences of such incomparable neatness, that ninety-nine out of a hundred of his hearers were sure to be taken in, and believed him to be the greatest philosopher of the day.

The business that brought the dean to Westborough was characteristic of the man. He had two objects in view. In the first place, he wanted to secure the archdeacon's adherence to a little

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scheme about which he was just then manœuvring. He was a diplomatist, and he won his battles by taking his opponents by detachments. Just now he expected a struggle with all the Cathedral authorities; and, like Horatius, he had taken to his heels, and meant to tackle them one by one. This was how it was. The masses at Oldchurch were in a sad state. Except in the Cathedral clique, what religion there was generally took some unhealthy form of dissent; every species of unorthodoxy flourished and grew with a rank exuberance. Sunday was desecrated horribly, and the gin-palace keepers made their fortunes. When, therefore, a gentleman, signing himself "Fremuerunt Gentes," wrote to the *Oldchurch Patriot*, pointing to what had been successfully achieved elsewhere, mourning over the deserted nave of "our noble Cathedral," the dullness of parochial sermons, and the degraded condition of the populace, and offering, moreover, a five-pound note to head a subscription for fitting up the nave in question for a special service on Sunday evenings, all the pious enthusiasm of Oldchurch felt that he had hit the right nail on the head, and that the thing must be tried. Application was made to the dean, and the dean, cautious and respectful, referred the matter to the bishop. The bishop was perplexed. He had long been accustomed to a triennial objurgation from the extreme High and Low Church factions for allowing a musical festival to take place within the holy pre-

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cincts, and he bore it with the patience of a martyr; but he felt rather nervous about the new proposal, and, on the whole, disinclined to be still further victimized. He had no particular objection to popular preaching any more than to oratorios, but who could say what it would lead to? In his distress he consulted the dean. The dean saw difficulties: the expense would be enormous—would it be safe to tamper with the pillars? would it not seem a slight on the parish clergy? must it not lead to controversy? how could it be settled who should preach without giving offense? did the bishop see his way? The bishop emphatically did *not* see his way, and determined inwardly to oppose the scheme.

A solemn meeting of the Oldchurch clergy was convened to take the matter into consideration; and the bishop pictured to himself a happy scene, in which he, as their spiritual father, should explain the impossibilities of the case; the dean should second him with a vigorous speech, and the clergy, with a graceful acquiescence, should consent to abandon this mad and fanatical proposal. Unfortunate ecclesiastic! When he sat down after delivering his opinions, the dean rose. The bishop smiled at the unconvinced looks of his audience when he thought how his seconder's terse periods and plausible arguments would carry all before them. Alas! alas! that even episcopal bosoms should not be safe from the rude intrusions of di-

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appointment. The first symptom of danger was the dean's excessive deference. He began by expressing the extreme importance that must be attached to any opinion advanced by their esteemed and beloved bishop. To have heard him talk, you would have thought that the one special object for which dean, and chapter, and Cathedral, and all existed, was to carry out the wishes of that holy and venerable man; the dean buttered his victim previous to toasting him; like a serpent, he covered his destined meal with saliva. By degrees he managed dexterously, in depicting the fondness of the clergy for the dear old gentleman, to throw out one or two hints suggestive of the ridiculous. Without sneering, he could teach the rest to sneer; he alluded, in tones of the deepest regret and indignation, to a caricature which had disgraced the walls of the town, and been posted up on the very gates of the palace, in which the bishop had figured as an old woman brooding with her cat and broom over a fire in the Cathedral, inscribed "Gospel truth," while the multitude stood shivering outside, and clamored angrily at the close-barred doors for admittance. "How sad!" said the dean, with a little sigh, and the slightest possible twinkle in his cautious eyes, "how sad! an old woman with a broom and a cat! How wrong! how false! how irreverent! But the fact of such a portrait having come into existence—having been tolerated for a moment—having been sold to eager multitudes"

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(and the dean sighed again), "as fast as the engraver's men could strike them off, did it not point with a thousand other things to the horrible condition — the shocking degradation — of multitudes around them?" Here the dean's voice trembled with emotion, and he hastily brushed away a tear. "Is it not shocking," he continued, "that here, in the closest proximity to this sacred pile—which would, one might have hoped, diffuse around something of a spirit of reverence and loyalty—that here the ribald jest, the profane and vulgar caricature, should travesty the most affecting ceremonials, the most dignified officials of the Establishment—should hold men up to ridicule whom they all felt, he was sure, were privileged to be in so eminent a degree the physical and spiritual benefactors of their species! Such enormous crimes stamped infamy on the city, on the age of their perpetration. Such a state of things must be specially provided for. Extraordinary diseases demanded extraordinary remedies; and that remedy, he felt sure—that is, as sure as he could feel about any thing in which his opinion was not sanctioned by his spiritual superior—yes, he did feel sure, was that of a special service on Sunday evenings. Do let us," he said, and it was wonderful what an earnestness he contrived to throw into his smooth tones, "do let us snap these pitiful chains of routine that fetter us when we would stretch our hand to save some of this lost and perishing multitude. Don't let us fear to budge a few

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inches from the path which fashion enjoins, which prejudice sanctions, which a timorous self-indulgence clings to. Let us," and the dean clenched his fist as though grappling with an imaginary vagabond, "go out into the by-ways and hedges, and compel them to come in, and then I hope and believe that the proposed service will," etc., etc.

I really don't like to attempt to recall the neat little peroration with which you may be sure the dean concluded. His speech was thoroughly successful. In the first place, it relieved his conscience. He did verily and seriously believe that the service ought to be, and he was right glad to stand forward as its proposer and promoter, to champion it against all the bad motives which he depicted as opposing it. Then he had contrived to gratify his sarcasm by making the bishop look very small and foolish before all his clergy, and secured to himself the leadership of a party which he felt sure must be in the end triumphant. A clear majority were for the special service.

The bishop sat aghast; and as the conclave broke up, the dean offered him an arm with an artless mixture of humility and affection that must have convinced the most incredulous Disssenter in all Oldchurch that their dean presented a combination of Christian graces very nearly unrivaled in the annals of Christianity. But the dean's tender heart was not satisfied with this, and that evening he sent a little note to the palace assuring the bishop that

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nothing but the imperative sense of duty would have compelled him to so painful a task, and devoutly hoping that nothing ever should occur to mar the harmony of an intercourse which—

"'Tis a lie!" said the bishop, as he threw the note unfinished into the fire.

Is it for me, a poor layman, to say that he was wrong? And yet, on the whole, I am inclined to think it was not a lie. The dean would probably have found it difficult to analyze his own feelings. He had no wish in the world to quarrel with the bishop; when he was not unusually stupid, he rather liked him. At the same time, if the matter had fallen into his hands, it would have been a dead failure; that had to be prevented, at all hazards: then came in ambition, the enjoyment of stealing a march and of seeing the bishop's dismay, the excitement of success, and twenty other motives pushing this way and that, and resulting in what is commonly called hypocrisy. And yet the dean was no villain, only a strong form of what three fourths (and perhaps the most pleasant and convenient three fourths) of his species are on a smaller scale. He was not uniform, but full of conflicting impulses, tastes, convictions. He saw that his species were to be managed. He knew that life had two sides, and appreciated both of them. For instance, that very week there was a party at the palace; the dean was sent in to dinner with little Miss Goody Twoshoes, the most excellent, admirable, foolish creature in exist-

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ence. She believes in all sorts of stupid people and absurd things, is abandoned to tea-parties and Methodist parsons, and her ignorance, as even her friends admit, is absolutely unfathomable. She is as narrow-minded, bigoted, ridiculous as you please; but she is generous, disinterested, and heroic, and is blessed with the daily gratitude of half the bedridden folk in Oldchurch. On the dean's other side is old Betty Raffish, who for the last fifty years has acted on Lady W. Montagu's suggestion of taking the "not" out of the commandments and putting it into the creed, who reads Paul de Koch, rouges her withered old cheeks, and plays piquet with her French maid on Sunday evenings; but she's acute, shrewd, has tact and good taste, talks capitally about the men of the last generation and the books of this, discusses Mr. Frisky's æsthetical brochure with a great deal of good sense, and is undeniably a wonderful enlivenment to the bishop's dull table. Is it the dean's fault that one of his neighbors is an ignorant fanatic, and the other a shrewd old woman of the world? Could he have the heart to smile at Goody's account of the tame cannibals of the Wishy Washy Islands? Can he lay down his knife and fork, and look Betty in the face, and say, "Now, you horrid, wicked old woman, why don't you mend your ways and leave off paint?" Such frankness would be fatal to all the amenities of existence. Society could not survive it a week; and, in fact, the dean has some sympathy for both his compan-

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ions. Good people and clever people are both capital in their way, and ignorance and wickedness are always lamentable; so, when Betty curls her handsome old lip scornfully about Miss Goody's cannibals, or when Goody turns up the whites of her eyes at Betty's French novels, the dean would be doing himself injustice if he did not concur. He is not thoroughly open and downright, of course, but how can he be? He honestly admires the saint; he is sincerely interested in the sinner; in either instance, he is a *bonâ fide* partisan as far as he goes. His insincerity is almost thrust upon him — the heavy price which men of composite natures, delicate tact, and quick insight have to pay for enlarged knowledge, more general interests, and a wider field of action.

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CHAPTER VI.

ATTACK AND REPULSE.

ONE of the dean's objects in his visit to the Rectory was to make sure of the archdeacon as an adherent in the special-service controversy. In the next place, he had a design upon Wynne. The master of Benedict's used to write to the dean about University affairs, and had told him how one of their fellows was coming into his part of the world with young Leslie, and how this same fellow, when he had last been down to the college audit, had been quizzed in common room about his share in the *Chanticleer*, and, in fact, was well known to have a hand in that vigorous periodical. "In short," the master wrote, "I think Wynne is the sort of man you would like to know." The dean thought so too, for he was inquisitive about the *Chanticleer*. He had no notion of becoming a Cathedral daw; the Oldchurch world he found provokingly provincial and behindhand; and he was glad to hear of a decently-informed man who could give him a real good draft of recent intelligence. He liked pumping people, and saved himself a world of trouble in reading the papers by managing, whenever he

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could, to get a chat with the men by whom those valuable sources of information are composed. He was a good listener as well as a pleasant talker, and used to boast that in half an hour he could get the cream of most men's opinions; and now he intended to skim Wynne, and, if possible, to bear back a fresh stock of information to his benighted fellow-citizens. Besides this, he had a pet hobby as to the adjustment of church-rates, to which he hoped to make Wynne a convert, and to have the benefit of the *Chanticleer's* slashing articles on its behalf. The dean, you see, had instinctively a sharp eye to ways and means, and, like a wise man, left no stone unturned in the accomplishment of his objects.

His present move was not a bad one. The *Chanticleer* was vigorous and frisky. It crowed every morning very loud, and pecked all the other cocks terribly. Without the slightest hesitation, it flew at some of the most distinguished game that was to be found in all the preserves of literature and politics, and, dashing into the very Olympus of journalism, directed its fiercest assaults against the deity who sat there presiding over an august assembly of "able contemporaries." Its youth was said to have been distinguished by precocity. Like a young Mercury, it was hardly out of its cradle before its prowess began to be demonstrated by all sorts of mischievous pranks. The monthly nurses of literature, and a great many other old women, conferred over their tea-cups, and predicted the infant's speedy dissolu-

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tion. It was not long for this world, that all were agreed upon. The symptoms were variously interpreted, and all kinds of prescriptions suggested for them. "Look at its fists! If it goes on in this way, 'twill end in convulsions," cried one. "It has demolished two popular preachers and a member of Parliament only this week," said another. "Drat the child, what makes it scratch so!" ejaculated a third, who had incautiously ventured too near the cradle. "It wants some settled convictions to quiet its stomach," suggested a fourth; while a fifth did not believe it had ever been christened, and declared it was little better than a heathen brat. All these benevolent anticipations, however, were destined to disappointment; the babe flourished and grew into a sturdy child; it had some kind political friends who took it into society, and the savageness with which it by turns attacked different members of the clergy so endeared it to the rest of the profession, that I am told it was soon upon visiting terms at half the parsonages in the kingdom. In fact, it was so smart, and had such winning ways, there was no resisting it. The British public pricked up its ears, and the *Chanticleer* tickled them famously. It made havoc with several established reputations, and was quite prepared to quarrel with all its neighbors. The *Parthenœum*, which was very, very literary, *Figaro*, which was spasmodically amusing, the *British Statistician*, which prided itself upon accurate figures, and the *Sentimentalist*, which was strong in

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high morals, all soon found that there was "a chiel amang them taking notes," and that they must look to their arms. The *Growling Watchdog* scented heresy, hinted at a combination of atheists and Jesuits, and prepared forthwith for a fight, while the *Publican and Sinner*, a beery Protestant of tap-room celebrity, renowned for its classical and prophetical acquirements, shook its fuddled old head at this new sign of the times, alluded mysteriously to certain passages in Daniel, and sorted its vials like an apothecary when some new disease has broken out. Meanwhile the *Chanticleer* gathered strength, and went its way rejoicing. No wonder the dean was anxious to dip his fingers into one of the streams which fed this reservoir of wisdom; no wonder he had determined to get Wynne to come and stay at the Deanery; no wonder he considered the fortunes of his church-rate theory as made. Alas for the uncertainty of human hopes! *l'homme propose*, but matters, the dean felt bitterly, sometimes fall out with most provoking perversity, and spoil our very nicest schemes. Wynne was as disagreeable as possible, in a thorough bad, impracticable humor, and the other's velvety manner made him chafe and fret, and long for some pleasant impropriety by way of relief. All attempts to draw him into conversation were signally unsuccessful. In vain the dean propounded the most suggestive questions, the most tempting paradoxes; in vain he allured to the bright world of church-rates, and led the way; in vain he

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fired sallies across the table at Rachel; none of the men were the least impressed; Robert treated him like a college don, and called him "sir;" Rex was mock ceremonious and irreverent; Wynne would not attend, and appeared to be entirely engrossed in his second help of rice-pudding. The dean felt his defeat, and retired upon the ladies; a little bright stream of half banter, half compliment was just the thing for Mrs. Ashe, and it was soon flowing, fresh and sparkling, into her ready ear.

"How deliciously bracing the Westborough air is!" he said; "one really feels five degrees less stupid than one does at home. How I wish we could transplant all the opposition party at Oldchurch here for a few hours, and relieve them of something of their unutterable dullness."

"Fancy them," said Reginald, "bathing in their surplices; singing the hundredth psalm in the breakers, their mouths full of thanksgiving and salt water; taking headers off the rocks, and combing their locks like a band of sea-goddesses."

"And the precentors," added Wynne, "like satyrs dancing on the sands; the bishop, of course, like a modern Proteus, watching their gambols from the cliff above—"

"Or flapping his lawn-sleeves like a frightened hen," said the dean, who was never at a loss for a good-natured simile, "cackling from the water's edge when her brood of ducklings unexpectedly take to their natural element. I am sure it would

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do us all the greatest good; I think I must have a dip myself. Don't you think, Mrs. Ashe, that there may be infection in moral matters as well as physical? There's a sort of contagion of wrong-headedness which affects one by mere proximity—who can touch pitch and not be defiled? who can breathe an atmosphere of minor canons, and not grow bigoted and narrow-minded?"

"I am sure you need be under no apprehensions as yet, Mr. Dean," said the lady, with a dignified condescension; "we look upon Oldchurch as our metropolis; I always imagine that there is a good deal stirring in the town."

"Stirring!" cried the dean; "not an individual atom, except a decrepit omnibus that totters feebly down to meet trains that never bring any passengers; lately, indeed, all Oldchurch has been thrown into intense excitement by the arrival of the new clergyman at St. Cross-sticks."

"What, Mr. Atherton? Have you seen him?"

"Indeed I have; I've not only seen him, but heard him; he will, I think, prove a treasure," added the dean, putting on one of his solemn faces; "yes, a real treasure; such zeal, such enthusiasm, such a warm churchman!"

"And a good preacher?" said Mrs. Ashe, who, I am sorry to say, attached a somewhat excessive importance to this part of the service.

"Well, yes," said the dean, giving a little "hem" of indecision; "he is, at any rate, fluent, and his language highly ornamented."

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"I hear he is extremely valued," said the archdeaconess.

"Ah! I dare say," said the dean; "for myself, I sometimes doubt whether feeble reasoning gains very much by impassioned manner. What I object to in Mr. Atherton is, that he seems as if he hoped to make a weak argument go farther by the mere force of his delivery, just as they say you can fire a tallow candle through an oak plank, if you only send it fast enough."

"I remember Atherton's fame at St. Benedict's," said Wynne. "He was rather celebrated as an *enfant perdu* in those days. He got plucked for his divinity. He never could learn the articles of religion, and when they asked him which were the major and which the minor prophets, he said he must entirely decline drawing invidious distinctions."

"There's a divinity that shapes the ends of a great many of us at Oxford," said the dean, "and very tragical ends they often are. However, we will be charitable enough to hope he has studied theology since then. But his arrival is not the only Old-church excitement. What do you think of the dear bishop's last movement?"

"What, pray?" asked Mrs. Ashe.

"Haven't you heard? the London doctors have ordered him gentle exercise, and he has taken to riding, and people say that there is a new footman taken on at the palace, whose sole occupation it is

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to devote himself to the bishop's black boots, and to brush them two hours every morning till they are as polished as—as one of his own witticisms."

"Are bishops generally dandies?" asked Wynne, looking up from his rice-pudding.

"Yes," said Rex, "and all great men besides; Blucher, Napoleon, and Wellington have given names to boots, no doubt because they had a *penchant* in that direction."

"Do you know, Aunt Ashe," asked Rachel, "how much a year Rex spends in new waistcoats?"

"It is quite pleasant to see these little foibles in really great people, though, is it not?" said the dean, lisping again into his neighbor's ear; "they reassure one of one's common humanity—one might be driven to despond, you know, when one compared one's self with them—the bishop, for instance."

"He certainly is a great and good man," said Mrs. Ashe, solemnly; "may he long be spared to us!"

"And to Oldchurch and the cause of Truth!" piously ejaculated the dean; "our good men are no drug in the market: in this age, too, when so many serious questions seem to confront us, a period of such general upheaving—where so many great principles are at stake. By-the-by," he added, turning to Wynne, and trying in despair whether simplicity would succeed where art had failed, "I should be so glad to learn your opinions about all this church-rate question. I am sure they would be worth something."

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"I have no opinions," answered Wynne, "except those I write at chambers, and they're worth precisely a guinea apiece."

"Ah! I see. 'The oracles are dumb,'" said the dean, with the utmost good-humor. "You are quite right not to commit yourself on any question that borders on religion: one may give such offense without knowing or meaning it. Thank you, Mrs. Ashe; I never can resist your pastry, you know. A little, if you please."

"Ah! I know you like our simple cookery," cried the archdeaconess, delighted.

"Such delicious cream, too!" exclaimed the dean. "That is one of your country privileges, Mrs. Ashe. I hope you are duly thankful."

"Is the Oldchurch butter pretty good?" asked Wynne, looking very grave, and as if he really wanted to know.

"Tolerable for a town," said the dean, with a bland innocent smile, mentally putting Wynne down for a good round sum on the debtor side of his account of unsettled injuries.

Presently the archdeacon arrived from his morning ride, and, on the whole, it was rather a relief when he and the dean retired to discuss the special services in private.

Every body but the three men had gone. Wynne got up and shut the door, and then burst out laughing.

"*Parlons bas! j'ai vu Judas*," he cried, "and a

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very amusing Judas too. He's as good as a play."

"A play!" said Rex; "I wish there were any half as good. There's more comedy in one of his smiles than is to be found in all the theatres in London. Who says a man may not smile and smile, and be a—"

"Be a dean," put in Robert, "and a very good one too. Why not? He's rather over-polite, certainly; but I declare I like him."

"Like him!" cried Wynne. "My dear old Bob, you would like Machiavelli, if he came and cheated you before your very eyes."

"Robert is so preternaturally honest himself," said Rex, "that he does not mind his friends being subtle. An old lawyer like Wynne has to stipulate for the rest of society being well supplied with Christian graces."

"The dean is a manager, I suppose," said Robert; "that is how he comes to have that manner. He has got his own plans to forward: at any rate, I like a man with plans. If a man will only have good definite aims, and push for them, I am half his friend already. Sometimes they can be gained only by a little manœuvring."

"Manœuvring indeed," said Wynne; "if a man can not have an object without looking as sly as all that, I should recommend him to give it up, and wash his hands of the whole concern."

"With his own soft soap," suggested Rex.

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"Well," said Robert, "I like a practical man—a man who does not despair of the republic, as you good people seem inclined to do. Surely it is well to do something for the world—to be a missionary, or a soldier, or a discoverer, or something—to help somehow or other in the general progress."

"To have designs on one's species, eh?" said Wynne; "to dabble in philanthropy? Well, I suppose it is very nice and right for people who have a turn that way; I am not so gifted."

"It is all the beef and beer you have been devouring up at Oxford that makes you so enthusiastic," said Rex. "The world is and always has been out of joint, and a great many people have tried to set it right, and only made matters worse than before."

"Nonsense," said Robert; "it is a slow work, but sure.

> **"They say it takes seven men to make a pin,**
> **Seven men to a pin and not a man too much,**
> **Seven generations haply to this world**
> **To right it visibly a single inch,**
> **And heal its wrongs a little."**

"Let me see," said Wynne, "seven men to a pin and nine tailors to a man, that's seven times nine, sixty-three; just conceive poor little Snip, who writes to Rex twice a week for a long account of smart clothes, and is no doubt as philanthropical as possible, only having a sixty-third part in the amelioration of his species. It's pitiable."

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"One knows," said Rex, "that the world is a pretty kettle of fish, and that one is one of the fish one's self; and when the water is unusually hot, we flap our tails and think about jumping out—"

"Out of the kettle into the fire," said Wynne. "You had much better stay where you are; Hamlet thought so, at any rate."

"I think the dean has put you both into shockingly bad tempers," said Robert. "I don't believe the world is a kettle of fish, nor do you, but a very grand and serious affair that one does not understand in the least, and so had much better hold one's tongue about; you did not make it, and it was probably not made either to please or amuse you, and so I don't see what one has to do with it."

"We will hope that it will all come right," said Wynne.

"We believe that it will," said Robert.

"Well," cried Rex, "now we have had hope and faith, so I will represent the third Christian grace, and be charity; and I shall exercise it by putting an end to so solemn a conversation. Suppose we go and labor for humanity by making ourselves agreeable to the ladies; and Robert shall read us some sacred poetry on the sea-shore."

"Well," said Wynne, "I must be off to Parson Lonsdale; we are going for a walk along the cliff."

"I hope he will give you some good advice," said Robert, "and send you back in an improved frame of mind."

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"Wynne is going to confess," exclaimed Rex, with a laugh. "I would not be Lonsdale!"

Wynne and the parson had soon become great friends, and yet they had scarcely an opinion in common. Lonsdale formed a still stronger contrast to the other three men than they did to one another. Each took the world from his own point of view. Robert looked at it through a halo of cheerfulness, purity, honor—threw himself ardently into its hard work—bore its failures lightly, and reveled in its successes. Reginald took matters as they came, found a niche in which to enjoy himself, and did not trouble himself to look farther. Wynne found life uncomfortable, dull, perplexing, worked up every thing that occurred to him into a confusion and entanglement, and then left it in moody discontent. Lonsdale felt the grave and sorrowful side of existence, its bitter pangs, fruitless longings, vain clutches at lasting happiness or distinct knowledge—felt it at his heart's core, staggered under his heavy load, but fixed his eyes on the end to which his pilgrim's path led him, and thither pressed on with weary feet, but with the steady and disciplined faith that follows upon the rout of vanquished doubts, and with the unhesitating resolution that marks the consciousness of danger and the possibility of despair.

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CHAPTER VII.

LONSDALE'S SERMON.

If there was one thing more than another that tried the archdeacon's nerves, it was rough weather. His easy, sunny temperament was ruffled by it amazingly. Try as he would, he could not be philosophical about it and take it quietly. The Westborough coast was a dangerous one: a mile off from the shore was a long, shifting sand-bank, which made it a perilous passage for vessels beating in for the harbor. On this bank, when there was an east wind, the incoming tide used to rush in its full force, lashing itself into a thousand wild forms of rage, tearing along the fresh channels which it was constantly forcing in the yielding sands, and throwing up a great white ridge of surf, that might be seen, a token of disaster, for miles along the coast. In such weather, if a ship missed the proper channels and got aground, it was seldom indeed that a rescue could be effected. The life-boats were ready enough to go out, but it was only in comparative calm that they could get near enough to be of use. Such times were a sore trial to the archdeacon. Many a morning, on waking, had he hurried to the window, and

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drawn up his blind quite nervously lest his view should disclose some wretched craft hopelessly fast, and dim figures waving passionately for the help that none could give them. The Westborough people were not nearly so sensitive: they took the foul weather quite as a matter of course; the rough adventure and excitement of it were rather congenial to their sturdy natures. A great many of the men had some time or other been out in the life-boat in some mad attempt to save a crew or secure a salvage. A sharp look-out was kept from the shore, and in a few minutes men could be collected from all over the town, and two or three boats be manned and sent off to any distressed vessel. The performances of these boats were matters which all classes felt to touch their personal honor, and regarded with the most intense interest from an artistic point of view.

Before July was over it seemed that their efficiency was to be well tried; the wind had been getting up for days, and on Sunday morning it blew a gale. The day broke gloomy and lowering; the beach-men predicted a rough time, but the fishing-boats were out as usual, and would not be in till next day. These occasions touched Lonsdale to the quick; they realized so entirely his view of life, as of something tragical and mysterious, full of abrupt transitions, dark catastrophes, with the dim unseen world ever close at hand; he knew full well how the women cried and trembled, and lay wide

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awake the night through, shuddering at each gust, and praying God, for dear mercy's sake, to pity the lives out at sea, the lover, the husband, and the poor sailor lad, mother's boy. He had read the service over more than one body washed ashore, the only one of some lost, unknown crew, the one horrible token of some tragedy which no man but the sufferers beheld or knew of. He felt, too, that these were his golden times with the sailors: they were enthusiastic, excitable, fervent; they liked him well enough generally, and bore with him with a sort of good-natured, half admiring, half contemptuous acquiescence; but now, with God's angry elements to back him, they must listen and believe; he could appeal to the raging war without, to the death which they knew so near to all of them; he could catch the excitement of the moment, and guide it into the channel of religion. Then the danger of the time deeply affected him; it strained his nervous temperament almost beyond endurance; he would, with the most perfect calmness, have steered a boat into as wild a sea as ever sailor dared to face, if that had come in his way; but the absence of action made it horribly trying. To stand and wait, and know the dreadful possibility; his conscience, always morbid, torturing him now with a thousand agonizing doubts and regrets; had he done all that he might to win them? had he been outspoken enough, gentle enough, fervent enough? had personal motives enfeebled his conduct and influence over them? had

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love of ease or timidity checked him? There were the men, lost, cut off suddenly, gone irretrievably, and whither? and he to meet them again! So a storm always roused him into unusual energy; whether they would hear or forbear, there should at least be no want of passionate earnestness on his part. As he stood in church that afternoon, you might have seen that it was no common burden that weighed down his heart—no human fire that kindled his enthusiasm—no holiday work that he felt himself about. And yet he did not rave or use fine words, or mount up into noisy declamation; his voice was lower, his language plainer than usual, his delivery less rapid; but every sentence was leaded; he spoke with a deliberate, desperate firmness, like a man who had struggled with a truth and been vanquished by it, and now wears its yoke patiently, and follows it unquestioningly wherever it leads him. It was a grim truth that had mastered Lonsdale, and he obeyed it, not without suffering; it bore him down to the ground, and its presence was attested by an unmistakable emphasis and reality. Every sentence, his hearers felt, was wrung out of his inmost self—every expression corresponded to something profoundly felt within. There was complete stillness and attention; the whole effect was one of intense solemnity as he quietly propounded the tremendous alternative which fascinated and absorbed his own mind; would they hear and turn, or be lost—lost in a sense compared with which be-

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ing dashed to pieces on the Westborough sand-reefs was mere child's play? There was the plain fact, and he spoke out resolutely. It might well be solemn. During the service the storm got up, the church grew darker, stiller—and still Lonsdale went on remorselessly. Outside, the wind howled dolefully in the old roof and up in the tower, with mysterious rumblings; now the pelting rain dashed angrily against the lattices; now there was a pause, and the stillness was such that you hardly dared to move, and still Lonsdale went on delivering his message, and reading the stern scroll of God's wrath to his over-wrought and excited audience. There was that tension of nerve and feverish activity of brain that predisposes the system for some shock—and still Lonsdale went on, calm, but with the calmness of a man face to face with death. Rachel watched him with brightened eye and quivering lip. Reginald felt it would be a relief if he would stop and let them go; the archdeacon was fidgeting nervously. At last a hurried foot in the porch—the door flung suddenly open, and a lad stands there, panting and flushed, and signals with his hand. All knew what it meant; in a minute every sailor had left the church, and Reginald whispered to Ella, "There is a ship on the sands."

Presently Lonsdale came to a close, and the rest of the congregation soon followed the sailors to the scene of action. By this time, however, the main interest of the occasion was over. The alarm had

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been excited by a Belgian packet which had rashly come in between the shoals and the shore, and had only just been able to make way with its steam against the swift tide and furious wind. The sailors declared her escape wonderful. When the Leslies got down to the beach she had got within the breakwater, and was being towed along from the pier-side, rocking still, like a spent racer, on the great round swell of the harbor water.

Here and there among the busy crew could be discerned the drenched and shivering forms of the passengers, making their way up from the cabins to which the storm had driven them, and preparing right readily to set foot again on dry land. Then followed haulings, and pushings, and the casting of big ropes, excited shouts, and the wild rush of steam, till at length the vessel lay fast moored by the quay side, the passway was lowered to her deck, and the eager current of travelers began to stream up, and to mingle in the crowd that jostled and pressed against the barriers above.

Among the rest appeared a Frenchman bearing in his arms an apparently lifeless form.

"Let the gentleman pass with his daughter," shouted some one in front.

The crowd made way on either side, and the Frenchman gently laid down his burden, still scarcely breathing, under one of the sheds that stood along the harbor edge. Rachel at the first glance had hurried to the spot, and now bent tenderly over the fainting girl.

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"My poor little Grace," she said, as she smoothed back the hair from the stranger's forehead, and took one of the icy cold hands in her own.

The new-comer slowly opened her eyes, gave Rachel a languid smile of recognition, and then seemed, by the terrified look of every feature, to relapse into the half-consciousness of some horrible dream.

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CHAPTER VIII.

GRACE FEATHERSTONE.

A MESSENGER was sent for a carriage, and Rachel presently carried off her new-found friend in triumph to the Rectory.

"And so," said Reginald afterward, "this is the Grace Featherstone you used to write to me about from Madame Laboise's, as the embodiment of all that was most delightful?"

"Yes," answered Rachel; "and now you will see that I was not romancing."

"She is really excessively pretty," said Ella; "you may count me among the worshipers."

"You will all lose your hearts, good people," cried Rachel, "so be prepared for the worst."

"What a blessing," said Rex, "for me to be beyond the reach of danger, and to have no superfluous adoration to dispose of!"

Rachel and Grace had once been at school together in France, had sworn an eternity of friendship, and kept up an assiduous short-hand correspondence ever since. Grace's history was as picturesque as her person, and promoted her from the very first to a chief place among Rachel's favorites.

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Some twenty years before, an English officer, on his journey homeward from foreign service, loitering at his ease through pleasant Continental cities, and effacing the remembrance of a dull station by such opportunities of love-making as Fortune, who proverbially favors the brave, was benignant enough to throw in his way, had found himself suddenly brought to a stand-still by the charms of a little French lady, whom he met at a grand ball of the Burgomaster of Bruges, and with whom he waltzed into matrimony before either party well knew what they were about. Captain Featherstone's father, who was thoroughly British in his prudence as well as his Protestantism, promised no very hearty welcome to a daughter-in-law who was at once dowerless and a Catholic, and the young bride, in no little awe of her English relations, had tempted her amorous warrior, himself in no desperate hurry about moving forward, to linger on, month after month, in the comfortable unruffled existence of the old Flemish town, until, on one evil day, the bright sky was overcast, the pleasant monotony was rudely broken, and Captain Featherstone, a widower, gave his little daughter into the charge of her mother's kinsfolks, and set out sadly to rejoin his regiment, and, if possible, to forget his cares. A few years later Grace lost her father, and since then had spent her life alternating between a troop of noisy French cousins and the oppressive stillness of a little English household, where her aunt, an elder sis-

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ter of Captain Featherstone's, passed her maiden hours in lonely dignity, and, cherishing her brother's memory, received her foreign relation for a certain portion of every year.

It was on one of her journeys to this lady that Grace and her uncle had been thrown up, as it were, by the storm upon the Westborough shore. The archdeacon was soon in a tumult of hospitality, and declared that neither of the travelers must think of moving on; Rachel's ardent advocacy supported the archdeacon and carried the day. Mrs. Ashe, who had a keen eye to the Decalogue, and an especial aversion to Sunday packets, was inclined at first to be a little fussy about so untimely an arrival.

"You see, my love," said the archdeacon, "that the wind is a sad, unruly fellow, and has never yet been persuaded into keeping the fourth commandment. Only this year two of my finest sermons have been spoiled by all the sailors suddenly decamping, and I wish with all my heart they could have heard Lonsdale's this afternoon to the very end."

The lady was easily pacified, and the two strangers made themselves uncommonly pleasant, and were presently as much at home as possible.

Rachel was in great spirits at the happy accident of the afternoon, and the good turn that matters had taken.

"We have rescued you from the grave aunt, my

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darling, and the stupid house at Kensington, and now we'll send the French uncle home, and keep the niece to pet and amuse ourselves with all the summer."

Any body better fitted than the new-comer to be the subject of such agreeable usage it would be impossible to imagine. She was rather tiny, but what there was of her was first-rate. A delicate, slender neck, whose every movement was elegance itself; a picturesque little head, forever glancing this way or that, and wearing at every turn some fresh coquettish airs; a pair of humorous, suggestive eyes, that could be merry, or languid, or pathetic at a moment's notice, and flashed all sorts of curious fancies in all directions; hands that it was a perfect luxury to see gesticulating, and a figure upon which the simplest dress acquired a previously-unsuspected gracefulness, made up a whole which was dangerous, to say the least, and which naturally enough made Mrs. Leslie tremble for Robert's first-class when she heard that Grace's visit was to be prolonged, and thought what bad friends love and study are generally found to be.

No prudent mother could have done otherwise; and Mrs. Leslie looked upon Grace as all the more alarming from the variableness of her looks, and because the sudden beauty that now and then lit up her face was not always to be found there; expression, motion, excitement, were needed to bring it out. She constantly disappointed you for the

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first moment: you fancied the color something less striking than before; you remembered a beauty, and felt that there was a falling off, and wondered how you could have admired her so much; now she looked downright plain, and you were provoked, and steeled your heart against her accordingly. Deluded mortal! in five minutes you were just as enslaved as ever. She regained her empire by some pretty air or look, some graceful gesture so inimitably appropriate; she waved her hand, or tossed her head, or knitted up her delicate brow, or put on one of her provoking pouts, just in the most capital way in the world, and you returned to your first verdict, and did homage with twenty other adoring fools to the most bewitching of her species.

The archdeacon was an early victim. He was always chivalrously polite, and Grace's cleverness did all the rest. When she came to wish him good-night, and the archdeacon held one of the pretty hands in his, and bade her heartily welcome to the new home so strangely found, Grace carried his hand to her lips, swept him the neatest possible courtesy, looked a whole volume of thanks out of her beaming eyes, and ever afterward counted him among the most devoted of her adherents.

Days went by; the French uncle had long, confidential interviews with Mrs. Ashe, and a new and more interesting phase of Grace's story was brought to light. Captain Featherstone, it appeared, had died almost in debt, and Grace, who till now had

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been provided for by her relations, had been seized with a sudden craving for independence, and was bent upon seeking her fortunes among her father's countrymen. She fancied that she should enjoy teaching, or, if not, she had so fine a voice, and such a genius for acting, that the idea had been started of her preparing for the stage.

Mrs. Ashe turned absolutely pale as this last proposition was revealed, and resolved to arrest the poor little traveler on the high road to a theatrical pandemonium. Rachel suddenly discovered that she was spoiling the children's French by her bad pronunciation, and petitioned for a successor. Before a week was past Grace was promoted to the vacant throne, and was endeavoring to initiate the refractory Etonians into the delights of Telemaque. She had so much good taste that she soon fitted into her own place in the household, and was good friends with every body but one. Ella alone could not understand her position: was she the guest or the governess, and how did they all mean to treat her? "How?" said Rachel; "as the most charming creature in the world, of course, and chief of all my bosom friends. Why, Ella, she is perfection—absolute perfection! Did you ever hear any thing prettier than her singing?"

"Oh, of course not," said Ella; "but that is part of the business, you know, like a professional performer. Almost all governesses sing nowadays."

Rachel looked at her future sister-in-law in blank

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dismay, and ever afterward endeavored to keep the two apart. Sometimes, however, quite unconsciously, Ella said things that made Grace look up in nervous surprise, while Rachel bent over her work, blushing deep red, and Rex, with a clouded brow, marched silently out of the room to let his wrath and torture blow off in private explosion.

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CHAPTER IX.

MRS. ASHE "AT HOME."

THE excitement of the new arrival, and the fact of the dean being at Westborough for several days, induced Mrs. Ashe to determine upon an entertainment of more than ordinary splendor. The dean was delighted to come, and had brought Atherton over from St. Cross-sticks for the purpose, as he told Mrs. Ashe confidentially, of getting a little good advice from the archdeacon. Lady Trumpeton and her two daughters arrived early in the evening; presently came Dhui M'Turbot, a Scottish chieftain, with two more young ladies, and Major Foppington, one of Rex's many friends in close attendance. One by one, little unknown parsons slipped timorously into the room, and intrenched themselves behind ottomans or in unobtrusive corners; quiet ladies of benevolent aspect gathered in groups, and disburdened themselves of various philanthropical projects; Captain Tarefield and Ensign Wiffles, who stood high in Mrs. Ashe's favor from having fortunately met her while escorting their regiments to church, had come the afternoon before to beg for an invitation, and were now busy telling

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Ella about the last archery ball; how the youngest Miss M'Turbot as near as possible shot her papa with her bow and arrow, and then danced in the most unblushing way with Major Foppington all through the evening. Mrs. Ashe, attired in the most becomingly old-fashioned cap—Grace's own contrivance—moved nimbly amid the crowd, and appeared to be charmed with her guests. She carried Atherton by storm, put the astonished M'Turbot under a heavy fire of cross-questions about a revival in Dumfries-shire, and presently, in her course of triumph, made a descent upon the soldiers. They, like the rest, had to surrender at discretion; and Wiffles, a bashful youth and accustomed to little music but the convivial strains of mess-room suppers, was led away in complete submissiveness to take his part in a sacred duet. Captain Tarefield promised to take some tracts to distribute in the regiment.

"I will choose some for you, written on purpose for soldiers," said Mrs. Ashe, considerately. "The Conscientious Corporal," "The Happy Drummer," "Up Guards and at him," or the "Soldier's True Conflict:" they will do so nicely for the men to read in the evenings instead of loitering about in that dreadful way at the public houses."

Tarefield, who was but an indifferent theologian, and the fastest man in his division, looked terribly frightened, smoothed his handsome mustache, and muttered a feeble assent. The archdeacon's eye

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twinkled, and he moved hastily away to another part of the room. His loyalty forbade him to enjoy what his humor suggested; and it would have been a sin and a shame for any one to have disturbed his lady's happy unconsciousness of every point of view in the world except her own.

"Our men are rather a wild set, I am afraid," said the gallant captain, "and not very often disposed for reading. What do you think, Rex?"

Reginald quite agreed with his friend that the proffered literature would not be received with avidity in the martial circles for which it was intended, and told his aunt that she must herself take them in hand, and Captain Tarefield into the bargain, and give them all a thorough talking to.

Mrs. Ashe would have been quite prepared to undertake the superintendence of the morals of the whole British army, but at this moment Atherton's voice arose distinctly amid the surrounding clatter and arrested her attention. He had been holding forth to an admiring circle of unattached ladies, and he now turned to address his host.

"Mr. Archdeacon," he said, "we have been having a little controversy here about the inspiration of the Maccabees. I appeal to you."

"To me!" said the archdeacon, who of all things dreaded an argument. "Really, Mr. Atherton, I must refer you to my superior."

The dean was an adroit man. "There is one form of inspiration," he said, turning to Rachel,

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"about which we are all agreed. Miss Leslie, will you sing us another of those charming songs?"

"The subject of inspiration," said Atherton, emphatically, as Rachel's song came to an end, "is one—"

"On which Miss Leslie is the only authority for to-night," put in the dean, with a contemptuous dignity which brought the color into Atherton's cheeks. "The last few bars of that air," he continued to Rachel, "always seem to me among the very most pathetic things that Mendelssohn ever wrote. It is delightful to hear them worthily sung. By-the-by, Miss Leslie, I hope we shall persuade you all to come to our Oldchurch festival. We are in the greatest excitement about it. The organ has had two new stops put in for the occasion; we are to have a grand soprano from London; the choir are all practicing themselves into consumptions, and the very air is impregnated with Mozart and Beethoven."

"Delightful!" said Rachel. "I shall enjoy it of all things; but, Mr. Dean, I want you to hear Miss Featherstone sing, and I never will forgive you if you do not admire her as much as I do."

"Considering the demands you have made already on our powers of admiration," said the dean, "that seems a little hard; but I will do my best. I should tell you, too, that to conclude our festivities we are to have a fancy ball, at which the bishop and Mr. Atherton are expected to dance a *pas de*

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deux symbolical of the most interesting phases of ecclesiastical history. I intend to represent some beautiful abstract idea; what do you recommend me?"

"Simplicity," said Rachel. "What character do you mean to take, Mr. Wiffles?"

"Is there really to be a fancy ball?" asked the blushing ensign.

"You will hear all about it from Mr. Atherton, sir," said the dean, with a polite smile. Meanwhile Ella played a serenade, and Rachel went to summon the Miss M'Turbots to perform.

The Miss M'Turbots hesitate.

"I mean to explore your music-book and find out what pretty new songs you have brought," said Rex. "Verdi, I declare, from beginning to end!"

"Yes," said Miss M'Turbot, "I am addicted to Verdi;" and so she was. She went unflinchingly into all those estimable airs with which, through the instrumentality of barrel-organs, the public ear has long been familiarized. She mourned with Mario from the turret window, declaimed "Stride la Vampa" with an impetus which would have made Madame Alboni shudder in grim earnest, and finished off the venerable "Il balen" with an amount of flourish that implied, if it meant any thing, that the "tempesto del mio cor" must have been a very terrific form of West Indian tornado at least, if it were susceptible of no less vehement interpretation.

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Miss M'Turbot's semitones were not as exactly in tune as a connoisseur might have wished, and she certainly floundered through the runs as if nothing but a providential interference could bring her safe to the conclusion of her strain.

"Thank you," said the dean, who had been screwing up his mouth in agony all through the song. "Very pretty indeed. A Scotch air, I presume?"

Miss M'Turbot looked unutterable scorn, and made place for her sister, and her sister, who loved simple melodies, proceeded, without more ado, to sing the "Brook." Poor little tuneful brook, that you should ever fall into such ruthless hands!

"Well," whispered Rex, with a shudder, "if men may come and men may go, but she goes on forever, I am for being among the men who go."

The dean had beaten a shameful retreat, and was now in deep politics with Sir Million Muddlebury, the Oldchurch Conservative member, who had come in while the "Brook" was meandering to its close.

"Ah! Sir Million," he said, "I am rapidly becoming a Tory of the first water. We are going down full gallop into a wild democracy."

"Too true," said Sir Million, with a groan; "and to think that our Reform Bill might have saved the country!"

"Perhaps," suggested the dean, "people have got a little tired of the Tory cry of preserving the state; some of us, I am afraid, would like to preserve it—as people do pickled walnuts—in a very

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advanced stage of decomposition, rotten boroughs and all."

"Well," said the member, "you will admit, I hope, that the way in which they treated our bill was absolutely scandalous—to mutilate first, and then to kill, is unnecessary cruelty."

The dean laughed gayly.

"The Liberals, you see, considered it treason to their cause, and condemned to a traitor's end; evisceration, you know, was the first part of the sentence. But there is Miss Featherstone singing; let me recommend you, Sir Million, to listen."

Grace managed her voice, like every thing else which belonged to her, to perfection; there were such pathetic tones, so many lovable affectations; such nimble turns, and high, clear shakes; such tempestuous bravuras, such heart-rending minors, that the tears gathered in Rachel's eyes as she sat looking and listening; and Sir Million, as the last notes died away, turned to the dean, and declared upon his honor that it was as pretty a song as ever he heard in his life.

In another part of the room, Ella, who had confessedly a weakness for officers, was established as the centre of attraction to a little circle of military gentlemen, who all seemed to be voluble and entertaining, and were surprising themselves and each other by the brilliancy of their talk. Captain Tarefield especially was in great force. Rex had introduced him, half reluctantly, to his future wife, for

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Tarefield was essentially a bachelor friend, and was associated with exactly the portions of Rex's bachelor career which he was just now especially anxious to forget, and which contrasted most disagreeably with his home life. Tarefield was a capital fellow on the top of a drag, or in the smoking-room at the club, but was hardly in his element, Leslie felt, in the Rectory drawing-room; his tones were somewhat rough, his sentiments not quite refined, his ease a little too familiar; Ella, however, seemed delighted with her new acquaintance, and laughed so much that Major Foppington, who was having rather a dull time of it among the M'Turbots, by a dashing manœuvre escaped from his fair enslavers, and joined his brother officers to know what all the fun was about.

"I hope, Miss Bathurst," said Tarefield, "you are indulgent to our poor Reginald, and intend to reform him by degrees. You must not expect him to be a saint for at least six months."

"Oh, but, Captain Tarefield, I don't profess to like saints," said Ella; "an interesting sinner is far better material to make a good husband out of."

"Shocking," cried Tarefield; "not like saints! that is a most dreadful confession indeed. I'm afraid I shall never stand high in your estimation; here's Mr. Wiffles, too, in despair at being so irreclaimably virtuous, and evidently resolving to sin himself into your good graces on the very first opportunity."

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"Indeed," said Wiffles, "it's a premium on being wicked. And what is your favorite crime, Miss Bathurst—betting?"

"No," said Ella, "that is not fair; I don't like crimes, of course, but something a little fast—smoking, for instance."

"Do you really allow Reginald to smoke? Happy man!"

"Yes. I embroidered him a cap to smoke in; did I not, Rex? and do you know, once—"

"Once what? Now we are going to have another confession."

"Well, once (but I'm dreadfully ashamed of it, and never tell any one) I actually smoked a cigarette, and liked it."

"We must make you an honorary member of our yacht club, and Wiffles shall bring you a case of cigarettes to-morrow. Why, Leslie, you lucky fellow, you will be able to smoke in your brougham, coming home from parties, as comfortably as ever."

"We are going to have the most wonderful brougham," said Ella, suddenly grown talkative; "the very prettiest in all London. It is to be dark green, and to have a black horse, with green rosettes; isn't it, Rex?"

"You had better have Tartarus at once, that Rex and I stand to make our fortunes on next Derby."

Leslie frowned at his too communicative friend, to warn him off dangerous ground, and Tarefield, with presence of mind, dashed boldly off into an

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account of an expedition to Ascot, where he believed he had seen Ella the previous summer, and where Ella confessed to having made her fortune in gloves.

"Come, come, do listen to Miss Featherstone's song," said Leslie. "Her voice is a great deal better worth hearing than—"

"Than mine," said Ella. "There is a speech for a lover, Captain Tarefield."

"Horrible!" said Tarefield; "poor Rex is still sadly behindhand; as you don't care about his being virtuous, you must devote yourself to making him polite."

Rex appeared uncommonly sulky, and presently left Ella to her admirers, and made his way to the piano-forte, at which Grace was performing, and where the dean was criticising and applauding with all the taste and authority of an experienced connoisseur.

"Music hath charms," whispered Tarefield to his companion. "You will no doubt find that French lady a great help in the process of civilization."

Ella did not seem altogether flattered by the suggestion, and thenceforward thought Grace neither so pretty nor so interesting as she had at first imagined.

* * * * * * *

The guests had departed. Mrs. Ashe had warned every body to bed, and gone herself, and a family conclave gathered under the veranda to watch

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the wide blazes of summer lightning, and to pass sentence upon Atherton.

"Absolutely odious," cried Rachel, leading off with a generous impetuosity. "I was so delighted when the dean put him down! the Maccabees, indeed!" Grace pursed up her lips, and mimicked him very prettily.

"What a world of satire!" said Wynne; "really, it quite frightens one to think of all the dreadful things that may be going on behind one's back. By this time, I dare say Miss Leslie has noted all our weakest points; and of course, Miss Featherstone, you can take us all off to perfection."

"To be sure," said Grace; "and you believe so too, don't you, Mr. Leslie?"

"I believe and tremble," said Rex, "though we are not all of us quite such palpable impostures as Atherton; but, since he has fallen into your hands, I quit[illegible] him."

"Do not waste any pity on him," said Wynne; "he is an emissary of the *Watchdog*, and no doubt came here to-night brimful of envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, to chronicle our festivities for the next week's number."

"I hope, then, he heard about the dean's fancy ball," said Rachel; "that would be a delightful piece of scandal."

"As you are all being so good-natured," said Robert, "I will be his champion, and so I am sure would old Lady Trumpeton, who seemed to like

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him amazingly, and promised to take him with her to the Duchess of Roehampton's to-morrow."

"I wish them all joy of him," said Rex; "and now, if we have said enough unkind things, suppose we all go to bed; and to-morrow, Miss Featherstone, you must give us some more mimicry."

"Yes," said Wynne; "and some more songs, I hope."

The fact was that Atherton, who knew the value of a good patroness, had made the best of his time, and had become quite a favorite with the Trumpetons. Lady Trumpeton thought him the most delightful of his species, and, in return, he lent her books, and gave her good advice, and made himself useful in a hundred ways. Opportunity favored his hopes, for Lady Trumpeton exactly agreed with the duchess about theology, and the duchess managed the duke, and the duke had influence with the government, and Atherton, through a smiling vista, already saw his rose-strewn path leading him by a pleasant incline right up into the House of Lords.

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CHAPTER X.

PARTING.

THE course of true love was evidently not destined to run smooth with Rex and Ella. Her visit had been a failure, and he felt it the more bitterly as it drew toward its end. Ella had not in the least appreciated the Rectory and its inhabitants; and they, in turn, had found her presence rather embarrassing and oppressive. Each party had begun to recognize the solemn fact of uncongeniality, and the result was a great deal of discomfort and stiffness. Rachel was tongue-tied when her brother discussed his marriage: it was in vain that she made all sorts of heroic resolutions to be enthusiastic about it, and to pretend to herself that she felt the slightest affection for her destined sister; the archdeacon was elaborately courteous, and nothing more; Mrs. Ashe tried unsuccessfully to find her heart, and soon gave her up in despair, as completely uninteresting; Mrs. Leslie saw less than the rest, and still hoped for the best. Rex himself knew the state of the case, felt now and then an awful misgiving, and was provoked with every body else for seeming to share it. Still, love is a hardy plant, and Rex was tender-hearted to a fault.

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There is always a touch of melancholy about a departure, and when Ella's last morning came, both lovers appeared sufficiently dolorous and sentimental. Rachel went with them to the station, in great alarm lest some scene should be impending in which she would have to be either a participator or a looker-on, and she felt no desire to perform in either capacity; and yet her heart smote her now, for Ella minded going dreadfully, and was unusually nice and affectionate. Rachel remembered how often she had felt angry or contemptuous toward her, and reproached herself for the feeble intimacy which had grown up between them. Ella looked quite interesting and pathetic as she sat, tearful and silent, till the train was ready. Rex bustled about, and soon established her comfortably in an untenanted carriage, with a maid to take care of a whole host of pretty bags, shawls, dressing-cases, and other impedimenta which Ella considered essential to comfortable traveling.

"Good-by," and away they went. Rex gave a long sigh as he watched the train go clanging out of the station.

"Poor dear old Rex," Rachel said, taking his arm fondly, herself in a pleasing uncertainty between smiles and tears; "but you must not sigh like that; after all, it is not such a very dreadfully long time to November, is it?"

"I don't know," said Rex; "who is it that Time gallops withal? That sigh really did me credit; just at the right moment, was it not?"

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"This summer ends my reign," said Rachel, "and meantime I intend to be very tyrannical, and sometimes pet you just out of wantonness, when I am in the humor. But I can't allow any more sighs this morning."

Rex did not seem inclined to be romantic, and said, almost sneeringly, that he thought he might drag on a lingering existence till November, but that he really felt it due to the occasion to be broken-hearted for at least twenty-four hours.

Could our almost unconscious actions be thoroughly read and interpreted, of what different doubts and regrets, of how many half resolutions and whole fears, might not that sigh have been found to speak!

Rachel was baffled by her brother's mocking air in her attempts at consolation, and was glad when they had got back to the Rectory, and started off on horseback to join the rest of the party, who were busy at the children's picnic which had cost the archdeacon so many cares and such deep designs.

Mrs. Ashe was in her glory; every body was running on her behests and acting under her orders. The archdeacon would have lost his head twenty times over, and trusted implicitly to her superior powers. Wynne found himself installed at a furiously exciting game of rounders; Major Foppington, Tarefield, and little Wiffles, who had ridden over early in the day, and did not conceal their disappointment at finding Ella gone, had soon dismounted, and were now carrying about cans of beer

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as if they had been at nothing else all their lives; Grace was marshaling a crowd of babies round an imaginary mulberry-tree; Robert had got 105 at tip and run, and not a boy on the other side, not even the celebrated Westborough bowler with round-hand twisters, could get near his wickets; Methodists, Anglicans, Catholics devoured the proffered repast, as if for the credit of their respective establishments; the Russian princess came in a barouche with the four smartest gray horses that the Royal Hotel could boast of, and, with the Sclavonian embassador by her side, drank two mugs of beer and declared it nectar. Every thing had gone off to perfection.

And now the festivities were done; the last wagon had rolled off with its laughing load of humanity; the last chorus, more hearty, it must be confessed, than musical, had died away over the hill; and Wynne, who was designing a long evening's walk homeward along the cliff, had established himself at the foot of a wide-spreading elm, and was smoking the pipe of philosophical repose after the labors of the day and before those of the night, when a nimble, frightened footstep fell on his ear, and in another instant Grace came hurrying down the path with one of the children who had wandered away in the confusion of the entertainment, and had so been the cause of both getting left behind. The night was closing in, the place was lonely, and Grace, quite disinclined for an adventure, seemed

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heartily glad to light upon a friend. Wynne said they would go to the village, and there find some carriage to take them all home. Grace, relieved of her fears, soon became communicative, told Wynne about her school-days with Rachel, and was in the middle of an eloquent eulogium on her friend, when a sudden turn in the path brought Rachel and her brother close upon them. Grace stopped short in blushing embarrassment, and Wynne explained the accident which had promoted him to the honorable post of escort. As they rode home Rex laughed about it to his sister: "Grace is very charming, and Wynne very sentimental, and my good example no doubt infectious, and we will hope it will all turn out nicely."

Rachel laughed too, and said it would be charming; and yet, while she spoke, she was conscious of a strange pang, such as she had never felt before, and for which she would certainly have been puzzled to assign a cause.

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CHAPTER XI.

REJECTED ADDRESSES.

OPINIONS may be described as the brooks and fences in the steeple-chase of life. Some people go at them languidly, and mean refusing from the very first; others shut their eyes, and trust to a lucky chance to see them safely over; vehement natures rush at their jumps, and often get wrong from sheer impatience. Rachel's mistakes were, for the most part, of this kind, and her present conjecture was a brilliant example. Never were two people less inclined to fall in love with one another than Wynne and his companion in that summer evening walk. They were a whole universe apart; their thoughts, interests, motives, were completely different; each astonished the other. He looked upon her as a curious and remarkably pretty specimen of another species than his own, and would as soon have thought of proposing to one of the marble Venuses on the esplanade. She looked upon him as a person of mysterious age and wisdom, who was entirely absorbed in writing learned books, and whose courtesies might be freely accepted without alarm or suspicion. She could no more have dreamt of flirting with him than with her grandpapa.

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Before long, however, all Rachel's speculations about other people were brought to an end by an event which occurred to herself, and which very disagreeably absorbed the whole of her thoughts for some time to come. For weeks past the dean had been growing extremely sentimental; and sentiment, like murder, will out, even when a churchman's bosom is its home. It had not been for nothing that he hovered about Rachel as she sang, and applauded so feelingly as the performance came to a close. He found her delightfully piquante; she amused and excited him, and he was never so brilliant as in her company: she gave back such sharp retorts, and tripped him up so nimbly in argument, that defeat itself became a luxury, and the dean surrendered to his fair adversary with all the chivalry and good-will imaginable. When she appreciated his stories, and flashed him back a keen glance of pleasure as he quizzed somebody, he downright loved her. After all, it was delightful to find some one who was never ridiculous, and against whom the most fastidious taste never whispered a complaint; it was delightful to find a real companion with whom nature might play at ease, and prudence lay aside its mask. The dean felt lonely. In his very superiority to the crowd, which, of course, he was, on the whole, glad of, there nevertheless was an element of sadness. It was distressing to be always seeing through people, playing upon their feeble points, bending them to one's own designs.

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There is an isolation in cleverness, and it began to weigh upon the dean's spirits terribly. After all, he thought, what is my success? how much is it worth to be able to manage half a dozen old church-women, who should be driven like a flock of geese with a bit of red cloth? what a glorious achievement to circumvent the Bishop of Oldchurch; how grand to be able to sneer down Atherton; after all, have not the enthusiastic people the best of it? Is there not a sort of genius in being able to admire second-rate things and stupid people? is it not unimaginativeness that makes one so critical? am not I a mere over-trained, affected, dexterous pedant?

The dean grew none the more cheerful for calling himself names, and the solitude of his existence looked blacker than ever. What if this bright, refined, beautiful woman should come to bear him company. Every time the dean thought of it, the idea pleased him better. One by one the difficulties of the scheme, at first mountain-high, melted down and disappeared. Existence with her seemed likely to be so much keener and more enjoyable an affair. Success would be worth winning with her to sympathize. Pleasure, learning, art, fine pictures, exquisite music, the companionship of books, the excitement of society, how far more intense, how far more delicious would all become when shared with her.

The dean was quite delighted to find himself a lover. "Sighing like a furnace," he muttered to

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himself, "with a—let me see, what are the other traditional accessories of my latest phase? To think I should have lived to two-and-forty, only to turn sonneteer at last!"

Rachel had not the faintest suspicion of the tumult which was raging beneath her admirer's composed exterior. Within, love ran its wild career, but the dean's outer man was inexpressibly calm and unsuspicious. His wooing, however, did not prosper; try as he would, he could not make love to her. She understood only part of his nature, and showed him only part of hers, and not the best part. There were sacred precincts of sentiment, reverence, and religion, to which the dean's profane foot was never allowed even to approach, and of which perhaps he forgot to take due account. She saw that he laughed at things, not ill-humoredly, but still laughed, and it amused her to join; she looked upon that as his vocation. When he was not brilliant and satirical, she evidently thought him not himself, and got tired of him; if he tried to be grave, Rachel used to put on a solemn, quizzical face, and evidently did not believe a word; when he was being polite to people, often sincerely enough, he caught Rachel smiling. She thought him a joke, and a very good one; but jokes, the dean felt despairingly, are not exactly the things one falls in love with. There was something in the entire composure with which she flirted with him that ought to have told this sagacious lover

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how little he was cared for. "Mr. Dean," she would say, "I want you to come and sit next me, and be amusing, please; tell me all the cruel things you have said since Sunday;" or, "Do put your horse in the train, and come and ride with me. I can get no one here who can keep up; and pray bring the bishop and his boots; I am longing to see them;" or, "Pray, Mr. Dean, when are you going to invite us all to Oldchurch? I want to explore the Cathedral, and to hear the new organ, and to play it myself; and, if you please, you may blow for me."

How it smote on his heart! what a shame it seemed that, when for once he was touched and melted, he should only be mocked for his pains! What an awful risk, too, he ran, if he resolved upon a discovery of his sentiments! He shuddered as he thought of it. The Dean of Oldchurch down on his knees, telling his lovelorn tale to a flighty girl, who as likely as not would laugh in his face, and take him off afterward to her brothers!—a frightful possibility indeed; and yet the dean, who was a courageous man, when he saw his end, determined to encounter it, and meantime fervently wished all his cleverness inside the bishop's head, or in any other unlikely place, since it had come to stand between him and his first love.

His courtship was conducted with a certain chivalrous magnificence; no one better understood the philosophy of doing polite and delicate things in the pleasantest manner. At the Rectory, in spite

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of all opposition, he resolved to be agreeable, and certainly succeeded; he showed his good-nature and good taste in a hundred ways. Once, for instance, he overheard Rachel complaining about her want of a companion in her rides, and her brother's failure to find a worthy steed in Westborough stables; and a few days afterward arrived a kind little note for Rex, in which the dean said that, as he was so often at Westborough, he had resolved to send over a saddle-horse, and, till he came, would be really obliged to any one of their party who would keep it well exercised. Rex cheerfully accepted the offer, rode constantly with Rachel, and, as in duty bound, both of them always spoke of the dean as the first ecclesiastic of his age. Another time the conversation had turned upon Italian buildings, and the dean, who was an experienced traveler, and had collected pretty things from all over the Continent, said that he had two or three portfolios of architectural photographs, and would Miss Leslie like to see them? Rachel answered, laughing, that the dean was always trying to decoy them inland, and that she wished that Oldchurch and all its curiosities could be transported to the sea-shore, at any rate for the summer months. "Even apostolic faith," said the dean, "was content with mountains; and the removal of a whole cathedral city is too much to hope for in an age of skeptics and philosophers. Besides, such a sudden transition might be fatal to the bishop, who, like all great things and

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people, moves slowly." However, he did the best thing that circumstances admitted, for he sent over a servant on purpose to Oldchurch, and the precious portfolios, into which many an inquisitive aspirant to the dean's good graces had longed, and longed in vain, to look, were allowed to emerge from their safe retirement, and, with a neat message from their owner, were forthwith sent up to the Rectory for public inspection. So much good-nature was, as it deserved to be, irresistible, and the dean flattered himself that the crisis of his destiny was at hand, and that the decisive blow might now be struck, and struck with the certainty of success. There had been marches and countermarches, sallies and ambuscades, a long siege, a tedious campaign; and now the church militant, in the person of its dignified representative, had arrived, flushed with hope, burning for victory, at the evening of Waterloo.

The battle was fought out in the Rectory garden. The dean had dropped in for a little chat with the archdeacon; and when Rachel did not make her appearance at tea, he was on his legs in an instant, volunteering to go in search of her; he skipped through the open window with so much alacrity that Mrs. Ashe had scarcely time to speak before he was across the lawn and lost from sight in the thickly-planted walks. Presently he found Rachel, one of whose failings it was to make spasmodic attempts at gardening, wielding her spade rather wildly, and in the very act of undermining a rosebush. His

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approach rather startled her. The dean thought he had never seen surprise look so beautiful before. His heart beat quick; a pusillanimous sprite whispered the expediency of delay, and it was only by a violent effort that he advanced to the struggle, composed, graceful, and courageous.

"I am commissioned, Miss Leslie, to summon you from rustic pursuits, like the famous Roman, to preside at the republic of the tea-table; and I hope I am just in time to help you in mastering that refractory branch. Do let me tie it down."

"Let us go to the republic at once," said Rachel, "or my subjects will all be in open rebellion. Do you know, Mr. Dean, I have discovered that gardening is the most delightful thing in the world? I advise you to try it. You shall have a border next to ours, if you please, and come and hoe in it whenever you are at Westborough."

The dean was resolved not to joke. "Any thing that is perfectly simple," he said, "and which requires no effort, is sure to be pleasant."

"Oh, but it requires the greatest effort," said Rachel, "as you will find out by hard experience when you have got your border. Now, Mr. Dean, when will you begin? I dare say you never gardened in your life. Will you come to-morrow morning and have a preliminary lesson in weeding, or would you like to have a tray of mustard and cress to put outside your window and watch the whole process of growth from first to last?"

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The dean almost groaned at Rachel's unpromising state of mind, and maintained a resolute stupidity as he helped her in completing her task. Presently they came to talk about the pictures.

"How wrong of me to have forgotten to thank you," said Rachel; "and how very good of you to trust them to us. They are really beautiful. The worst of them is, that they make one so indignant at one's own attempts at drawing. I have given up my paint-box in sheer despair, and mean to have a solemn conflagration of all my sketches at the earliest opportunity."

"That would be to make us all owe photography a grudge forever," said the dean; "and besides, you know, it is good for nothing but buildings."

"And scenery," said Rachel. "What can be more charming than the mountains and lakes in your collection? I like photographs for every thing but people."

"Ah!" said the dean, "I am afraid there have crept in some of those shocking scenes among mine. That ruthlessly inconsiderate invalid, for instance, on the sofa, with the lover sobbing at the window, and a sister at her side. The whole party is a sort of protracted crisis of affliction."

"Yes," said Rachel; "and the lady never has the grace to apologize for being such an unconscionable time about dying. But there was one group which I liked: do you remember 'Revenge?'"

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"Let me see," said the dean; "a murdered boy, with an assassin standing over him, is it not?"

"You must not call him an assassin," said Rachel. "I think him charming. I like him so for abandoning himself to his one idea, and determining to gratify it at all hazards. He evidently does not in the least mind the cowardice and cruelty of which he has been guilty."

The picture was a striking one. A young man, whose effeminately handsome features and rich dress suggested an accustomed self-indulgence, had fallen backward as if from an attitude of entreaty. His delicate white hands were clutched, half in agony of terror, half in the convulsion of death. A great dark stream of blood ran down his breast and loitered in little pools in the folds of his velvet cloak; his sensuous lips were parted in a cry, and his languid, imploring eyes were riveted as if by some horrible fascination upon the figure which stood over him. No greater contrast than this could be conceived, and no less agreeable spectacle for a dying man's last glance. Murder was written in his great wild Italian eyes, but it was murder as a fine art. His dress was elaborately splendid, and he was wiping a poniard with an almost affected air of delicacy and calmness. The cheek was wan, and the features haggard and care-worn, as if with the memory of a long-treasured injury; but the entire composure of the smile which played along the thin, determined lips gave the whole face

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an almost satanic look of complacent ferocity, and seemed positively to haunt one when the rest of the picture had died away.

Rachel had puzzled a long while as to whose expression it recalled to her, and had at last assigned it unhesitatingly to the dean. "'Revenge,'" she said, "is a capital name for it; and pray who wrote the mottoes underneath?"

"That wicked old Miss Raffish," said the dean, "insisted that the picture did not half explain itself, and so I put, 'He makes the murderous passes as he smiles;' and then she added a couplet, but I am sure I forget what about."

"I have learned it," said Rachel; "listen;" and she flourished her trowel, and pointed to the prostrate rose-bush for the corpse, and began forthwith to recite quite earnestly—

"Low crouching at my feet he lay,
The man whom I had dogged for years;
I would not give him time to pray,
I mocked him for his maudlin tears—

"I told him how my darling died,
I breathed her name and watched him start;
Then drew the dagger from my side,
And smiling, pressed it to his heart."

Rachel colored up, and her fiery eye glanced as she gave the death-blow to her imaginary victim, and the dean thought she looked absolutely lovely.

"I am petrified with horror," he said. "My dear Miss Leslie, it is the very apotheosis of retali-

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ation. Pray let no one else see you, or we shall have assassination quite the rage, and, as a churchman, you know, I am bound to stand up for the sixth commandment. And so that is the sort of subject which you think a fair one for art?"

"Yes," said Rachel, "revenge is a good, strong, hardy feeling, which will stand exposure and can bear to be looked at; but all the sad and harrowing ones are shocking. I am not sure that I don't dislike that sort of sentiment in pictures altogether."

"I quite agree with you," said the dean, delighted to find his companion getting tamer. "There are some matters which no delicate mind could bear to treat artistically, and lovers' death-beds are no doubt among them."

"It is another form of botanizing on one's mother's grave," said Rachel, "when people make capital of human suffering, either with their paint-brushes or their pens."

The dean was watching his moment. "And yet," he said, "we may easily go into the other extreme, and lock up our feelings in a sort of unnatural privacy that is quite as absurd in its way."

Rachel felt that there was something unusual in his tone and manner, for she stopped suddenly and looked straight at him.

"Here am I," continued her companion, "who have been longing, for I can't say how long, to tell you a secret about myself, and never had courage

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enough to do it, and even now am frightened out of my wits at the confession; and yet it is one that people have been making to one another ever since the world began."

The lover paused, for he saw one expression after another pass across Rachel's clear brow and sensitive lips. Surprise at first predominated, and then annoyance, and then the dean fancied that he descried a tinge of self-reproach, and next a soft gleam of pity; in all alike he read the death-warrant of his hopes. Presently the stern truth came in solemn words, and the dean, who was prepared for every contingency but a rejection, was fairly thrown off his guard, and began to make mistakes in his confusion and despair.

At least, he suggested, Miss Leslie would not form her decision off-hand; would she prefer answering him definitely to-morrow; was not his offer, at any rate, worth a little reflection?

But no; Rachel was firm to give no reprieve, and refused even to pay him the compliment of taking time to consider before pronouncing final sentence. At last the dean's mortification fairly mastered him; and Vanity, already sorely wounded, hazarded one perilous inquiry at parting. "Was there any particular cause which led Rachel to act as she had done; for instance, might the dean consider her relation to any other person as the ground of his rejection?"

No question was ever more unfortunate. The

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dean never forgave himself for asking it. Rachel drew up her head, and looked excessively dignified.

"You forget yourself," she said, "when you ask me; you have no right to interrogate; but I will gratify you. Neither my relations nor my feelings toward any other human being have led me to answer you as I have done."

The dean bowed to his fate, and, as they approached the house, handed Rachel her flower-basket, and passed with cheerful gracefulness into the drawing-room.

"Miss Leslie," he said, "has retreated with some of the spoils of the garden, and will be here directly."

Presently, however, there came a message that Rachel was rather tired, and was not coming down, and the dean began talking faster and more merrily than ever. He asked Rex his opinion about his horse, rallied Mrs. Ashe upon having so many heretical neighbors within reach of so able a controversialist as the archdeacon, paid Grace several handsome compliments on her song, and was very amusing about Mr. Atherton's triumphs at St. Cross-sticks.

"I am sure he makes me quite ashamed of my own inactivity, and yet there is a sort of aggressive restlessness about his proceedings which is sometimes a little troublesome. He seems to want to bustle one into goodness. Some people, however,

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are born to a career of disturbance, and are, no doubt, very useful in their way."

"But none the less disagreeable," said the archdeacon. "I can not think why one should treat life as if it were one vast Donnybrook Fair, and be always looking out for some decent excuse for crying 'Whillaloo' and brandishing one's shillalah."

"Atherton's opinions, too," said the dean, "seem to sit so strangely on him, and seem to be scarcely more himself than his silk cassock. One feels inclined to ask, as the savage did about the French lady's ample attire, "Madame, tout cela est-il vous-même?"

"Yes, indeed," said Wynne, "one can not stand his way of dwelling with such emphatic satisfaction on his former shortcomings, which all of us would be quite prepared to take for granted; and then his sermons are so unconscionably long."

"I am afraid we all offend in that direction," said the dean, with a laugh; "and Atherton, no doubt, takes a malicious satisfaction in exhorting his species to be as correct as he is forced to be himself, just as they say old men give good advice in revenge for being able no longer to set bad examples."

"Well," said Robert, "both the Miss Trumpetons tell me he always makes them cry in his sermons, and their mamma is trying to get him a proprietary chapel in London. No doubt they are good judges, and I vote for having him at our picnic next

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week. By-the-by, of course you are coming, Mr. Dean?"

Mrs. Ashe joined in the petition, and said that she was sure he would be invaluable. The dean would have liked nothing so well, but next week, he feared, would be a terribly full one. "Westborough is tempting me into becoming a regular absentee, Mrs. Ashe, and the Rectory, I am bound to say, must bear the responsibility of a great deal of my neglect. Your hospitalities are pleasant enough to throw a whole diocese into disorder. However, to-morrow morning I must be off and try to make up for lost time."

The dean promised, nevertheless, to try to come to the picnic, and the next day turned his back on the scene of his discomfiture, and reappeared in his stall at evening service in the Cathedral a sadder and a wiser man.

Rachel, as she thought quietly over the events of the day, found that they had left her with a certainty and a doubt. The certainty was that she disliked the dean a great deal more than she had in the least imagined; the doubt was whether, in telling him that no thought of another had influenced her decision, she had not unwittingly wandered a long way from the confines of exact veracity.

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CHAPTER XII.

SUMMER DAYS.

Now that Ella was really gone, Rachel began fully to appreciate how great a burden her presence had been to her. Her very letters jarred like a harsh note, and Rachel used to crumple them up with a sigh, and toss them into the waste-paper basket as if for the speediest possible oblivion. The way in which she spoke about Grace was especially provoking. "By-the-by," she wrote, "how is your little French pet? I suppose by this time she has taught you all about the Opera, and that I shall find the whole party standing on the tips of their toes, like the fairies in the ballet. Pray tell her that I will have a lesson too when next I come." "Indeed you will not," Rachel thought, and busied herself more than ever with the courtesies of friendship, as if to compensate her guest for the rudeness of which she was unconsciously the victim. Reginald, too, had seen Grace sometimes slighted, and determined to make all possible amends. He found her society sufficiently attractive, and coaxed his conscience into enjoining upon him a great deal more assiduous politeness than many people under

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the circumstances might have considered strictly necessary. The children discovered that Grace's birthday was close at hand, and the picnic had been devised expressly in honor of the occasion. It was far too hot to do any thing energetic, so they established a camp under a favorite oak in the Lanton Woods, where the shade was thick and the view pretty, and a tiny stream that went rippling under the brushwood with a pleasant murmur insured an ample supply of the first essential of out-of-door cookery. In front lay the broad unruffled expanse of sea, basking in the full blaze of a cloudless sky. Behind them stretched away many an acre of woodland, as deep and interminable as heart could desire. On one side a fire of sticks sent its little wreaths of smoke streaming up among the foliage far overhead; and Grace's picturesque red cloak gave the last touch to the scene, and threw over the whole an appropriate tinge of gipsy life. It is pleasant to sit at ease and watch the struggles of another, but it is far pleasanter to lie quite still in a shady nook, and to reflect that outside the thermometer is at 130°. All the party felt a delicious languor, and surrendered themselves to contented indolence. Now Rex read lazily out of the *Princess;* now there was easy, rambling, intermittent talk; now long, dreamy pauses, while all the wood murmured overhead in the still bright day; and when the Rectory carriage arrived with the elders of the party, and the children appeared out of the

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wood all decked with wild flowers, and the archdeacon, with a great deal of comic gallantry, began to tell how it was in one of the avenues of this very wood that, forty years ago, he had a long talk to a certain lady, which had led to all sorts of important results; and when Rex, who was a man of resources, suddenly produced some bottles of Champagne, as if by magic, out of the stream; and one of the boys, after a great deal of whispering and blushing, stood up and stammered out Grace's health, with many happy returns of the day, and good wishes from all the party, Diogenes himself, if he had been there, would have felt bound in honor to confess that there are some aspects of existence less repulsive than others, and that this was a day which people who were weak enough to care about enjoying themselves had a good right to honor with a white mark in their life's calendar forever after.

Afterward idleness resumed its pleasant sway. Some one began reading the *Princess* again, but got on slowly. The archdeacon leaned his back against the tree, and set himself very busily to listen, and fell asleep with his hand in Mrs. Ashe's, and the pleasantest expression on his face. Rachel began a picture of the whole party, with one of the children in the act of kissing the sleeper, and the boys and her horse in the background. Presently the archdeacon awoke, and tried, by an affected briskness, to dispel the impression of his having indulged in a nap.

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"Come, come," he cried, "you all seem vastly industrious; and what are you about there, Miss Rachel?"

"I am the only industrious one," said Rachel, "and have the proud satisfaction of seeing the lords of creation sleeping around me. I really quite enjoy it. I am going to put you into my picture, uncle, asleep, with your mouth open."

"Pray don't!" cried the archdeacon, jumping up, alarmed, and coming to look over Rachel's shoulder.

"What would you have us do?" asked Reginald; "we are your humble servants, I'm sure."

"Amuse us, of course," said Rachel; "see how amusing the men in the *Princess* were."

"What! write poetry," cried Rex, "on such a hot day as this? I dare say."

"Why not?" cried Rachel, slipping some loose leaves out of her portfolio. "Here, uncle; Mr. Wynne, there is a piece for you, and here are pencils; what more can you need?"

"Inspiration and a subject," said Wynne.

"This sort of day ought to give you inspiration, and I will give you a subject: take what we were talking of before luncheon—Old and New."

"Old and New," said Reginald, lazily. "Well, any thing for a quiet life. Give me a pencil."

The archdeacon wrote his first and third lines, and fell asleep while looking for a rhyme to them; and Robert, who had been down at the brook,

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strolled up, and took a piece of paper and set to work with the rest.

"When you have all finished," said Rachel, "we will wake uncle to pronounce upon them, and I shall give my sketch to the best;" and accordingly, before they set out homeward, the archdeacon, with a great deal of state, read out the several productions. "Mine is only an epigram," said Reginald; "and mine an unliteral translation," said Wynne; "and I vote that Robert has his read the first." And so the archdeacon began—

"Vixere fortes post Agamemnona."

"Pray, what does that mean?" asked Rachel.

"It means," answered the archdeacon, "that nature never produced a more charming young lady than yourself."

"That sounds like an unliteral translation, does it not?"

"No," said Reginald, "word for word."

But the archdeacon read on—

ROBERT'S VERSION OF "OLD AND NEW."

The world, they say, is growing cold,
  And nations getting quite decrepit,
And blood that used to boil of old,
  Now creeps through men's veins barely tepid.

They talk about degenerate days,
  Say honor's spotless shield grows dimmer,
And ancient faith's celestial blaze
  Has dwindled to a feeble glimmer;

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That the bright stamp of heavenly birth
Is wearing by degrees away,
And that our poor old mother earth
Grows faint and fainter every day.

And can it be that now at last
The rich old wine gives place to new,
Or is't the distance of the past
That lends enchantment to the view?

Did learning's elder children see
Farther on nature's solemn pages;
Had they a richer lot than we,
Who are the heirs of all the ages?

Did Homer sing of nobler deeds,
Diviner courage, danger scorning,
Than nowadays half Europe reads
In the dispatches every morning?

Did Roman legion e'er stand surer
Than British lines in Alma's vale?
Were women nobler then and purer,
False Helen, than Miss Nightingale?

What of the band, sublimely small,
That stemmed rebellion's crimson tide,
And guarded Lucknow's battered wall
While the mad million raged outside?

No! no! through Fate's long tempest toss'd,
In danger oft, but shipwrecked never,
Though here and there a spar she's lost,
The brave old ship's as sound as ever.

The breed of good men is not less,
Nor duller grown our spirit's flame,
And courage, love, and faithfulness,
In every age are still the same.

Rex threw himself back panting in the grass, apparently quite exhausted. "For mercy's sake,

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stop," he cried; "consider the heat of the weather: *recitantes Augusto mense poetas!* Enthusiastic psalms of life, and the thermometer at ninety degrees in the shade!"

"You are not to sneer, Rex," said Rachel; "it's a very pretty poem, Bob, and you shall copy it into my album for me."

"Sneer!" said Rex, "I feel downright transported; all the courage, love, and faithfulness (is that right, Bob?) of my great-grandfathers throbbing all over my system. Rachel shall teach it to her class at the Sunday-school, and I'll hang it up over my bed in London, and close my eyes every night with the comforting assurance that our ancestors were just as great fools and knaves as we!"

"Now for the next," said the archdeacon; "silence!"

WYNNE'S VERSION OF "OLD AND NEW."

"Mes amis, ce n'est pas vieillir."

'Tis true, my friends, though sparkling now,
Our youth must hurry to its close,
And Time creep o'er each mirthful brow,
And leave a furrow as he goes;
But all around us springing thick,
To see fresh pleasures still unfold,
More flowers than we have time to pick—
This surely is not "growing old."

'Tis true, in vain with wine and jest
We keep the table in a roar,
Regret will come, unbidden guest,
The cup be drained, the revel o'er.

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But if the banquet still be free,
The chorus loud, the laughter bold,
And comrades pledged in three times three—
This surely is not growing old.

'Tis true, no more to meet our dear,
To some sweet haunt of love we hurry,
No more for us in beauty's ear,
The "lenes sub noctem susurri;"
But in calm joys one's days to spend,
Nor yet to burn nor yet be cold,
To change a mistress for a friend—
This surely is not growing old.

'Tis true, though here or there a while
By some bright spot we long to stay,
Fate drives us trudging many a mile—
Then hand in hand, friends, we'll obey.
Still hand in hand through stormy weather,
On our accustomed journey hold,
And come at last to port together—
Oh no, this is not growing old.

"That," said the archdeacon, "is very French—noisy, heathenish, and devoid of the highest kind of sentiment. The happiness of old people should be of a quieter character."

"For instance," Rachel put in, as she sat down by him and took his hand kindly, "going to sleep in a pleasant shade, and being petted by the most dutiful of nieces."

"And sketched with my mouth open. Now I'll read the epigram.

REGINALD'S VERSION OF OLD AND NEW.

The ancient Greeks had, wretched creatures!
Such faint ideas of female features,

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That, to combine the charms of faces,
They fancied there must be three Graces.
Our later, happier age refutes
The tales of those old heathen brutes,
And bids the world admiring see
Joined in one Grace the charms of three."

"That is capital," said Rachel. "I never would have forgiven you if you had all three forgotten the heroine of to-day. There, Grace, you shall give the prize—come, children, and make a crown for the poet laureate."

"Well, then," said Grace, "if I am to be arbitress, Mr. Wynne shall have the picture in honor of Béranger."

"Who would, no doubt," said Rex, "be vastly obliged if he knew the impertinent way in which a common hack scribbler like Wynne was handling his nicest poems."

"Jealousy," said Wynne, as he took the picture, "is always attractive, and Rex's is so prettily expressed that it is quite a luxury to feel one's self its object. You may well be jealous, for it is a very pretty picture, and I am exceedingly obliged to both my benefactresses."

"If I had known," said Rex, "what bad taste people have, I could have written half a dozen translations, or fifty hymns about faithfulness being still the same, much more easily than my epigram, which I still maintain is neat, classical, and appropriate."

And so the camp was broken up, the apparatus of the banquet packed away, and the move home-

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ward begun. Grace had left her cloak down at the stream, and Rex went with her to fetch it, and for a few moments the two were separated from the rest of the party.

"And so," said Rex, "you are very fond of French poetry?"

"Yes," said Grace, "and of English too, when it does not happen to be about myself. But you did not seriously mean me to give you the prize, did you?"

"I meant you seriously to like my lines, and I hope you did."

"No, I did not," said Grace: "no compliments in public; they make one feel awkward."

"Well, then—" put in Rex.

"Nor in private either," cried Grace, cutting him short with the prettiest of deprecatory gestures; "they are bad for one's humility; the chaff is very nice chaff, and I am not such a very old bird, but I am a great deal too wise to be caught."

"I think it is all of us who are caught," said Rex. "Rachel told us you would carry us by storm, and now we are getting quite envious of one another as to who shall be first in your good graces."

A ready blush sprung into Grace's cheek, and the tears stood thick in her eyes. "It is because you know I have had such misfortunes," she said, "and because you are really the kindest people in the world."

When they got home they found their letters

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awaiting them; there was a parcel for Rex from Captain Tarefield, which he seized upon directly. For days past some mystery had been brewing; there had been long confabulations, meetings by appointment, and a constant interchange of notes between Rex and half a dozen other of the young men, who had suddenly become very busy and self-important. Curiosity awakes, peeps, and listens. In vain; the young ladies are in an agony of inquisitiveness. What is your secret, Rex? Twopence for your thoughts, Rex. Reginald, however, was oracular until the moment for discovery arrived.

He half opened the parcel. "Now," he cried, "young people, what do you hope is going to happen? Rachel, what is your wish?"

"A yachting excursion to Lanton Reach."

"Another cricket-match," cried the Etonians.

"I vote for a night in the herring-boats," said Robert.

"And I," said Wynne, "hope it is the arrival of our packet of Cavendish."

"And Miss Featherstone?"

"Oh," said Grace, "I have not the slightest idea. Any thing you please—a ball, for instance."

"At which your obedient servants, the Westborough Bachelors, beg the honor of your company." And Rex produced a packet of very pretty invitation-cards, and handed them about to all the party.

"A ball!" cried half a dozen astonished voices.

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"Much ado about nothing," grumbled Robert, who hated dancing.

"No cricket, then!" ejaculated the boys.

"And," said Wynne, with a mock profound sigh, "no tobacco!"

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CHAPTER XIII.

VERY SUCCESSFUL.

"POUR moi," says Montaigne, "de ce que je n'en croirois pas un, je n'en croirois pas cent uns;" and no doubt it might be plausibly contended that, since every body is prone to error, the more people hold to an opinion, the likelier is it to be ridiculous. The folly of the age seems a sort of grand national picnic, to which each guest contributes his share, and a very nice repast it comes in time to be.

The good people of Oldchurch were no wiser than the rest of their species, and came collectively to a very absurd decision as to the relative merits of the dean and our friend Mr. Atherton. The latter incontestably succeeded with them the best; his eloquence was more to their taste; his arguments recommended themselves more to their judgment; his proceedings were more intelligible; he gave them a greater idea of the profundity of his acquirements; in fact, he made the running all through the race, and won in a canter. The truth was, the dean was too good for the sort of work: his taste revolted from the means which Atherton adopted without a scruple to ingratiate himself with the mul-

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titude, to obtain their regard, and influence their opinions. His keen sagacity saw through the gross follies and indecorums which did not distress the other in the least; he tried very hard, but he could not stand Miss Twoshoes' clerical muffin-parties; he could not bring himself up to the scratch in the Maccabees inspiration controversy; he shuddered when he thought how the Oldchurch young ladies bought his photograph, and were getting up a subscription to present him with a memorial. "It was too disgusting. Those atrocious, abandoned young women, that crowded to the Cathedral to hear his sermons!" Atherton, on the contrary, was all affability; and when the fairer portion of his flock presented him with a cambric surplice, performed his part in the ceremony with such infinite grace and feeling, and read prayers in it so exquisitely the next Sunday, that not a spinster among them but felt like Eloisa, that devotion's self must steal a thought from heaven, and treasured his dear image, ambrosial curls and all, deep in the snôwy recesses of her chaste imagination. Atherton worked with a coarser instrument, but it did the business far more effectually. He was the favorite, and all the devotion of Oldchurch rallied round him. Both he and the dean delivered a lecture before the Oldchurch Institute, and Atherton's superiority became more conspicuous than ever. The dean gave an account of some famous galleries and studios which he had visited in Italy. Whether the subject was uncon-

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genial, or his hearers hopelessly unimpressible, the performance was a tame one, and came languidly to its close amid a great deal of compliment, but very little sincere admiration. The lecturer felt he might just as well have been holding forth about the full-length portrait of the late mayor of Oldchurch which smirked from the wall above him, coarsely bedaubed by some vulgar hand with all the tawdry honors of aldermanic finery. Atherton, on the contrary, achieved a real triumph, and was interrupted throughout by constant bursts of applause; his theme was "Jerusalem," and his account of the expiring Crusader taking his first and last look at the sacred city was universally acknowledged to be one of the most deliciously harrowing things of its kind ever heard.

"Oh, Mr. Atherton," Miss Goody said, with a little sob, "it was too, too beautiful—that poor Crusader! How I wish you would publish your whole journal, with all the scenery of the interesting places, and that beautiful description of how you felt twenty centuries looking down upon you from the Pyramids."

Atherton smiled humbly, and said,

"Some day, perhaps, dear Miss Twoshoes, I shall venture into print."

And before the end of the summer he was as good as his word.

But Fortune's smiles never come singly; and successes, like sorrows, march in battalions. Yet

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another triumph awaited the prosperous parson, and this time the dean himself was victimized to enhance his rival's triumph. There was a pitch battle, and Atherton came out of it with flying colors, and was thenceforth the acknowledged champion of the field. The Oldchurch Entomological Museum was one of the very best in the kingdom: its collection of butterflies was famous far and wide, and was the legitimate pride of every patriotic inhabitant. It was managed by a committee, and the committee contained all the local dignities, and a great many enterprising ladies. Mr. Ripley, the curator, appreciated the dignity of his post, and devoted himself to the insect world with all the impetuosity of an enthusiast. Every thing had gone well, till one fine Sunday, by the merest chance in the world, a discovery was made which set all the gossips to work, aroused the curiosity of the inquisitive and the venom of the malicious, and led at last to the unfortunate curator's ignominious dismissal. Poor Miss Goody, who, though excessively benevolent, had the most provoking knack of doing and saying, and hearing and seeing precisely the wrong thing, was the immediate cause of all the trouble. She had caught a bad cold in her head in some of her philanthropical expeditions in the course of the week, and had now relapsed into a congenial diet of jujubes and water-gruel. As she could not go to church, she had invested herself for the time being with sacerdotal authority, and, with her little

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maid for a congregation, was duly performing the morning prayers, and intended to wind up with one of Atherton's most cherished discourses. They were just in the middle of the second lesson, when Miss Goody's eye, happening to wander to the window and out upon the pleasant meadows that lay behind her cottage, descried the sacrilegious curator, with a wide-awake hat on his head and a green net in his hand, in hot chase after some unlucky specimen which was fluttering and hovering along a neighboring hedgerow. The little maid thought that her mistress was certainly going to have a fit, so hurriedly did she draw her breath, and so wild a look of horror and astonishment did her whole countenance assume. She made the most extraordinary blunders all through the rest of the service, and when they reached the fourth commandment, read it out with decisive vehemence, that bespoke the tumult to which Mr. Ripley's unconventionality had given rise. In the course of the afternoon two of Miss Goody's particular friends came in to inquire after the invalid, and to comfort her with a little cheery conversation. She naturally enough disburdened herself of the awful secret, and the news spread like wildfire. Every body suspected Mr. Ripley of being "peculiar;" no one knew where he went to church; and the popular conviction, with its usual dislike of uncertainties, was not very long in determining the precise form of heterodoxy into which the erring entomologist had lapsed. Rumor

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pronounced that he was a Swedenborgian, and a Swedenborgian, as Atherton and Atherton's clique opined, was not at all a fit man to be intrusted with the Oldchurch curiosities. Some were for dismissing him forthwith; others insisted on a public recantation; and a third party gratified their taste for economy and persecution at once by proposing an immediate reduction of salary. Betty Raffish, with whom Mr. Ripley was an especial favorite, was furious at the suggestion, and found a warm ally in the dean. Little Miss Goody was vehement on the opposite side; and Atherton led off at the committee with one of his very best speeches. "What," he said, "is science, if it be not the handmaid of theology? What are the beauties of creation, the painted wing, the symmetrical form, the delicate structure, unless we look through nature up to something higher? how dead, how uninteresting must all appear to the caviling skeptic, the unprincipled latitudinarian, the unreasoning enthusiast? What could a Swedenborgian know of Nature's real teaching? must not a primrose by a river's brim, a yellow primrose be to him, and nothing more? in short, would it not be well to cut down the heretic's income to a point which would insure discomfort, and might facilitate conversion; or, if not, would result in the butterflies being handed into fitter keeping."

There are limits to human endurance, and when the orator came to the part about the primrose, the

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dean could stand it no longer, and burst out into a scornful laugh. Then he got up, threw prudence to the winds, and poured out the cup of wrath that had been so long preparing. "Provided that Mr. Ripley stuck the pins straight into the moths' backs, and kept camphor in the trays properly, and so forth, what possible business had they to interfere with his religion? What, he would be glad to know, had theology and entomology to do with one another, except that they both ended in 'ology?' Had Mr. Atherton the slightest notion what Swedenborgianism meant? Was he sure he was not confusing it with Cæsar Borgia? Did it involve any false views as to grubs and caterpillars? If they resolved to persecute, let them, at any rate, persecute honestly. How could any body with a spark of honor condescend to such an expedient as this wretched, contemptible one of the salary? Was it not pitiable, at the present day, for bigotry to sanction such shifts as this, and for the nineteenth century to succeed in copying every feature of the Dark Ages except the courageousness which made them respectable?"

"You good brave dean," said Betty, after the committee, "you are the only clergyman I could ever endure, and you are charming. You and I are the only two men of the whole party, are we not?"

"Brave!" said the dean, bitterly. "My dear Miss Raffish, you never said any thing bitterer in your

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life. Have you not found out yet that I am one of the most arrant cowards in existence? Such scenes as to-day's, however, are enough to make one turn hero and heretic for very shame."

"They really are," said Betty, always delighted to find a decent excuse for doing any thing objectionable.

"They make me blush for the name of clergyman—"

"And me for that of old woman. However, we won't be uncharitable. I want you to come to-night to tea with me; I have got Dr. Flash, the electrician, and poor little Cæsar Borgia, and we will have a quiet rubber, and revenge ourselves by unrestricted sarcasm till twelve o'clock."

Atherton, however, before long, took vengeance on himself. In the course of a few weeks there appeared a very neat little volume, blue and gilt, in nice type, and with a pretty frontispiece, and dedicated to the parishioners of St. Cross-sticks by their affectionate friend and minister, Horatio Atherton. It was entitled *A Lingerer in the Far East*, and a very loquacious lingerer he proved to be. There were sunsets and moonlights, mosques and bazars, journeys in the desert, ascents of mountains, explorations of tombs, and a good deal of theology, philosophy, history, criticism, and autobiography, crammed in by the way; in fact, quite a delicious intellectual farrago, and the Oldchurch people snapped and gobbled it up with a ravenousness that would

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have been indecorous had it not been so interesting. Its fame spread speedily. A great review put it along with fifteen other books at the head of an article on Eastern Travel, inserted as a kind of buffer between the "Grenville Administration" and "Mousetraps among the Greeks;" the *Publican and Sinner* wafted its praises aloft on a cloud of fumose panegyric; the *Watchdog* pronounced it free from any latitudinarian or Popish tendencies, and affectionately recommended it to worldly young men about to travel. The *Oldchurch Patriot* was of course in raptures, and gave a supplement gratis, with all the nice passages quoted, and a eulogium on the author, that must, from its vehemence, have been written by one of his young lady enthusiasts. There were some readers, however, who did not quite take the same view of it. Atherton was no favorite at the Rectory; the young men showed him scanty respect; Rachel was silent and haughty; Grace shot him mock deferential glances out of her impertinent eyes. The archdeacon generally had the most pressing engagements at the other end of Westborough on the mornings when he came to luncheon, and was as near disliking him as his gentle nature allowed. Even Mrs. Ashe, who always stood up for him, and ordered two copies of the *Lingerer*, was known at the bottom to be much less fervent in her admiration than she wished to be considered, and sometimes burst out laughing when a funny thing was said at his expense. Of one of

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these copies the young people fell foul; they read out the absurd passages (which were rather plentiful) for public edification; they ransacked it for mistakes; Rachel suggested one sharp thing, Reginald another; Wynne put them all together, along with some bottled thunder of his own, and the following week a very vigorous article was forwarded from the Rectory to the *Chanticleer* Office, Grub Street, and in due course of time appeared in that periodical. It was in the *Chanticleer's* most cheerful style; and the dean had no sooner read it than he slipped the paper into his pocket, and went rejoicing across the close to Betty Raffish's on purpose to read it to her. It began by saying how very nice and right it was that bad books should be written —not merely stupid books, or ignorant or ridiculous, but thoroughly and emphatically bad, like this, for instance, of Mr. Atherton's. Some hasty people were apt, it said, to be impatient with bad books, but the *Chanticleer* showed how many causes for thankfulness there were in connection with them. It was so very pleasant to get a bad book, and cut a page here and there, just to appreciate its badness; and then to shut it up, and reflect how incurably bad it was, and how many good and useful purposes it served in being so. In the first place, there were large and meritorious sections of the community, such as the bishops and clergy, the middle classes, and young women generally, who were far too foolish to like any thing but bad

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books; and no doubt reading bad books was far more civilizing for them than quarreling, or being fussy, or letting their minds remain a complete blank, as would necessarily be the case if they were not so employed. Then the *Chanticleer* thought that Mr. Atherton was probably less repulsively illogical and confused in his sermons than he would have been without the intellectual effort it must have required to keep a journal on his travels, and to write it out afterward with the i's dotted, and the stops marked, and the nominative cases agreeing properly with the verbs, in regular conventional English. Next, one ought to think what a comfort it was that his energy had taken this innocent direction, instead of starting a heresy, or writing a volume of sermons, or getting up another St. George's-in-the-East, and so being really troublesome and wicked. Then a very bad book aroused one's curiosity so pleasantly; why, for instance, did Mr. Atherton invariably misquote, and why give translations which would have involved a sound flogging at school? How curious that a man who had been to college should be hoaxed in such a palpable way by the dragoman about the cedar pencils which he bought on Mount Lebanon. What amiability it showed not to know that the legend he had heard at Kadesh-Barnea about the Good Samaritan had been more than fifty years ago ascertained to be an invention of some fast officers in Richard Cœur de Lion's body-guard. Again, Mr.

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Atherton probably imagined that the Maid of Orleans laid aside her sex with her petticoats, since he spoke of her as the principal *datum* for his theory about religious enthusiasm; or was it that Virgil's expression, *varium et mutabile semper fœmina*, had led him to the conclusion that in Latin "woman" was a neuter noun? The *Chanticleer* rather inclined to the latter hypothesis, and thought that it showed an ingenious simplicity that was remarkably pleasing.

The picturesque passages were not quite so much to the *Chanticleer's* taste. Of course, if Mr. Atherton chose to put himself to the very unnecessary fatigue of climbing about the supposed site of Nineveh, and copying cuneiform inscriptions, he had a perfect right to do so; but that he should seize the opportunity of throwing himself into a paroxysm of maudlin morality, and quoting Mr. Keble about "Empires on their way to ruin," was a little too much for human endurance. The fact that when houses are not wanted they are not used, and that when they are not used they fall into decay, and in sandy countries get covered with sand, was surely not either a very sublime or very affecting one; the same phenomenon might be witnessed at Broadstairs. Again, the author might think it very fine writing to talk about "the rich flood of an eastern sunset lighting up the impressive monotony of the sandy solitude, while the night breeze, with a sullen roar, rang the dirge of departed greatness amid the

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crumbling memorials of the desolated Palmyra;" but the *Chanticleer* could find no politer term for the whole passage than "bosh." It was not by heaping up the hackneyed stage accessories of desert scenery with this sort of clumsy profusion that any real impression was to be conveyed to the reader's mind: to begin with, the thing was physically impossible; the glare of the sand would make it extremely difficult to see the ruins; the wind would have blown the sand into the traveler's eyes, and he would have been much too busily occupied in wiping it out to indulge in any such high-flown sentimentalism. The probability was that in such a case the traveler would be swearing at the bits of rock he stumbled over, drawing disagreeable comparisons between sour camel's-milk in a tent and a comfortable dinner at his club, anathematizing the Arabs, whom he fancied taking shots at him from behind the bushes, and, in short, in about as thorough a bad humor as ever hunger, fright, and fatigue conspired to inflict upon an unfortunate pedestrian.

Even here, however, the *Chanticleer* could find some bright spots. It remarked that the binding of the *Lingerer* was remarkably pretty, that the book lay pleasantly open on the table, that it contained a well-arranged account of the hours and days on which the Red Sea Navigation Company's steamers sailed, and that travelers might find it useful to know that there was very fair bottled beer

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to be had at the principal hotel at Jerusalem by tipping the head waiter.

The dean met the victim the very same afternoon, and did his best to console him.

"It is as thoroughly unkind a piece of writing," he said, "as I ever came across. That part, now, about the cedar pencils, you must have found particularly galling; and the legend of Kadesh-Barnea."

"Oh, don't!" cried Atherton; "it is really one of the curses of the day that that kind of ribaldry should be the fashion."

"If I were you," said the dean, "I would get the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, or D'Oyly and Mant's *Commentary*, or some good book of reference, and try if I could refute them about the pencils, at any rate."

But Atherton had another and an easier remedy. His sermon the next Sunday was inexpressibly touching. "Life," he said, "after all, is no bed of roses; the clamor of the heartless rabble, the stab of calumny, the misconstruction of a thoughtless generation, malice, with its poisoned dart, jealousy, with its yell of rage, all, all conspire to mar our peaceful repose. Neglect and persecution may await us here, but we are appreciated in another and a fairer world." The preacher turned his eyes upward, and a whole gallery of young ladies, whose embroiderered pocket-handkerchiefs had been in great request all through the performance, were

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left in a pleasing uncertainty as to whether the compliment was intended for heaven or themselves. Goody Twoshoes was carried out in hysterics, and Atherton was forthwith promoted from hero to martyr.

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CHAPTER XIV.

THE WESTBOROUGH BACHELORS.

THE announcement of the Bachelors' intention created the most intense excitement. Existence at Westborough had begun to grow a little languid. Nature is delightful, but it is a calm delight; and, after all, Art is the most amusing. We revel in Arcadia and presently sigh for Athens. A pleasant sea-shore, with a moonlit sky and a cool night-breeze, is no doubt a more wholesome place on an August evening than a close-packed London drawing-room, with its wax candles, fiddlers, and flirtations, crowded staircases and unmanageable corners; and yet a few weeks of marine rusticity had quite prepared the good people of Westborough to welcome the promised return to their accustomed life, and the happy bachelors found that their entertainment was in no danger of failing for lack of guests. The Russian princess announced among the very first that she wished to be invited; the duchess, who was the soul of good-nature, sent expressly to Roehampton Castle for grapes and peaches; and Sir Million Meddlebury promised baskets of flowers and four London footmen, who were taller and

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more majestic than any thing that was to be had in Westborough for love or money. The neighboring squirearchy were easily persuaded into furnishing a goodly contingent of country belles, and every body was delighted to have something new to talk about and something important to arrange. Parties were made up by those who wished to go together, and many young ladies were engaged eight dances deep for a week beforehand. Rex found himself in command of an active army of carpenters and florists, and French cooks and musicians, and bent all his energies toward securing a success that should be worthy of the occasion.

"*Diruit*," said Robert, with an ostentatious contempt of zeal so unworthily expended, "*diruit, ædificat*—planing, and hammering, and sawing, and wreaths, and candelabra, and goodness knows how many hundred pounds to pay, and all for a dance."

"You can stay at home and write some more hymns, if you please," suggested Rex.

"Provided he pays his subscription," put in Wynne; "he will feel a melancholy satisfaction in contributing to the follies of his age."

Robert, on the whole, was Rachel's favorite brother.

"Never mind being teased," she said; "you shall come, and dance with me as often as you like."

"And I hope," said Rex, "if we are to begin to arrange about dancing already, that Miss Featherstone will promise me her first valse, to make up

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for Robert's unkindness, and reward me for all my diligence in the public service."

Reginald was a great dancer, and very particular as to the performances of the young ladies in whose society he enjoyed that refreshing pursuit. Grace was rather surprised at the request; she thought that he would be far too busy to think of her, at any rate till far on in the evening, and the first dance seemed a post of dangerous eminence.

"Oh no," she said, "not for the world. I am much too insignificant. Why, Mr. Leslie, there are half the young ladies in Westborough waiting for that privilege, and I should probably have my eyes torn out by an infuriated mob of jealous beauties."

"I will take the greatest care of your eyes," said Rex, "and will write down the engagement on your card at once, for fear you forget me in favor of Mr. Atherton or the illustrious Wiffles."

As the important moment approached, the cares of state gathered thicker upon Rex than ever, and encroached sadly on the time which a pardonable vanity would fain have consecrated to the adornment of his person. Wynne, when he came into his room ready dressed, found him still engaged in the most elementary part of the proceedings.

"*O formose puer!*" he cried, surveying Rex's toilette with mock admiration; "and are your preparations for conquest still incomplete?"

"Get away, Diogenes," said Rex; "don't come and preach to me just now, and distract my thoughts.

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There, take some eau-de-Cologne to put on your handkerchief, and scent your tub with when you get home."

"What a regular fop's paradise!" said Wynne, surveying the goodly array of rings and bottles, French novels and cigar-cases, which covered the table in generous profusion; "where is the presiding sprite, 'to curl the waving hairs, assist the blushes, and inspire the airs?' Bless me, what have we here?" Wynne had taken up a trinket-case that lay open on the table. It was a curious little locket, crystal, with a gold filigree over it, and an initial worked in old character stretching across it: it was tastily done, and Rex had apparently just unpacked it as Wynne came in. To judge from his manner, however, it had been intended for other eyes than Wynne's. He turned round hastily, and with an anxious, angry look.

"Oh, that thing!" he said, with a laugh, "that's a present I am going to give the bishop; put it down, and leave my treasures alone."

"Oh!" said Wynne; "and this gold work on it is a crosier, I suppose, is it not?"

"Never you mind, Master Inquisitive," said Rex, as he took the box hastily and locked it up; "what business have you prying into my secrets?"

"Heaven forbid!" cried Wynne, who certainly, for the most part, regarded Rex's flirtations with the most stoical indifference. "Come, come, there are the young ladies calling you."

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Reginald had not been wrong in his anticipations that Grace would prove the most desirable of partners. She did many things well, but the dancing was best. It was not mere rhythm—it was poetry. It was not only that the time was faultless and the step nimble, but every movement was eloquent in its graceful expression. Rex felt in a moment that he had found a mistress of the art. How pleasantly her delicate little hand lay in his! How lightly she hung on his shoulder, and swam about through the crowd, as though barely flesh and blood, but compounded of some less gross and earthly material. Rex steered her about so capitally, without the least trouble, and guarded her so well from collision with less skillful performers, that their progress round the room was quite a little triumph of elegance and agility; and Grace felt a pleased consciousness that more than one pair of eyes watched them admiringly as they hurried along. On, on they went, and the glittering multitude seemed to whirl round in a blaze of confused splendor. It really was a fine sight. All that was entertaining, and pretty, and striking in Westborough was assembled in full force, and looking its best. The officers came in their uniform, and the Westborough Volunteers came in theirs, and created a profound sensation. The princess was positively dazzling; her diamonds spread quite a halo of glory, and her gentlemen, well bedecked with foreign orders, looked

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exceedingly diplomatic and imposing, and were evidently quite prepared to make themselves agreeable.

Early in the evening arrived the colonel and his lady, both very magnificent. Rex said it made one feel all the easier about the national defenses to think there were such people standing between one's self and a French invasion; next followed the M'Turbots: the chieftain wore his kilt, and was soon deep in talk with Sir Million about a new kind of top-dressing for mangel-wurzel. His daughters were more agreeably occupied in a combined attack on Major Foppington, who, however, was quite equal to the emergency, and flirted alternately with either lady, with a calmness and presence of mind that showed he had been under fire before now, and was well accustomed to perilous positions. At the present moment he is dancing with the eldest; she waltzes with as much energy as she sings—the major's polite speeches induce a pleasing oblivion of the thickening crowd—and, good gracious! they have as nearly as possible run down Grace and Rex.

"What an escape!" Grace says, looking comically up at her partner.

"Nothing like it since the charge of the heavy brigade at Waterloo," answers Rex; "it makes me shudder to look at them; M'Turbot ought to forbid it. Now they have stopped, and we can go on in safety." And away they went. "Is not this delightful?"

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"I do not see any body who seems to be enjoying it as much as we do. English people always look grave when they dance," his partner answered; "it is a national custom, is it not?"

"Yes," said Rex; "in solemn silence all roll round this stupid Westborough ball, don't they?"

"In reason's ear," added Grace, "they certainly do not all rejoice. Just look at Miss M'Turbot."

"There is Rachel," said Rex; "suppose we go and talk to her. Rachel, I want you to dance the next Lancers with me; Wynne, you shall ask Miss Featherstone, and then we shall be a little family party presenting a pleasing combination of the two handsomest ladies in the room, and—"

"And one of the most impertinent men," cried Rachel.

"That must be meant for you, Mr. Wynne," Grace said, with one of her mock-respectful looks.

"Must it?" said Wynne, who was wondering how in the world he should get through the Lancers. "Nobody, I hope, has any disrespectful speeches to lay to my charge."

"No," said Grace, "not speeches; but we are all the more afraid of you for that, because we know you are laughing in your sleeve all the while."

"Laughing in my sleeve?" asked Wynne, making a spasmodic effort to recall the first figure. "Pray tell me how do we begin?"

Grace soon put him right.

"I suppose, Mr. Wynne," she said, "you don't care about balls, do you?"

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"You must not suspect me of being so stupid," said Wynne; "I do not, however, consider dancing my strong point, as Rex does; and as for the Lancers, my education was complete before they were invented, and I am always going wrong, as you saw just now."

Grace was accustomed to look upon Wynne as a person of indefinite age, and was not the least surprised at any symptom of antiquity.

"Well," she said, "I am glad you like them, at any rate; I think they are among the most delightful moments of existence."

"That is saying a good deal," said Wynne. "I like several things better; for instance, hearing you and Miss Leslie sing."

"Ah!" said Grace; "and reading that book you were defending to the archdeacon this morning?"

"Lucretius? Yes, I think I must put him next to the singing."

"And, pray," said Grace, "what is Lucretius about?"

"What are *you* about?" cried Rex, who was standing in the middle and waiting for his bow; "Rachel and I have been laughing at you this quarter of an hour."

"Dear me!" Grace said, with a little blush, as she slipped out and swept him the prettiest courtesy that was achieved that night.

"You see what comes of your talking to me so fast," she said, as she came back with the blush still

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lingering on her cheek. "Mr. Leslie, I can see, has a lecture in store for both of us for our inattention."

"No wonder," said Wynne; "you had decoyed me into the classics."

"Of course," answered Grace; "I am improving my mind, and want to know about Lucretius very much indeed."

"She is all that you described her," Rex said to his sister. "Every movement is the perfection of prettiness. The next beauty you describe to us I shall believe in to the letter."

Later on in the evening Rex petitioned for another valse, and afterward begged Grace to come and see one of the ante-rooms, on the arrangement of which he especially prided himself. "We shall find it delightfully cool, and I will tell you all about Lucretius," he said, as he led her away through the crowd. "Does not this little room do our ingenuity great credit?" It certainly did.

There were tasteful hangings that drooped around mirrors and clustered candles; and a soft light falling here and there on sofas and ottomans, that greeted the weary dancer as he came; and rising banks of choice flowers, that filled the air with a delicious scent; here a window looked out on the calm, bright bay, every ripple on its surface sparkling with a phosphoric gleam; and there, among moss and shells, a fountain was throwing up a tiny jet, and mixing its gentle plash with the half-heard tones of the distant music; and Grace said, without

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the least hesitation, that it was Paradise at the very least, and the most beautiful place she could possibly have fancied.

"And now," said Rex, "I am prepared to indulge your classical inquisitiveness; ask me what questions you please."

"No," Grace answered, waving her fan, "I am too tired; you danced so quick, I am quite exhausted."

"I will bring you an ice in a moment," said Rex; and while he was gone, Ensign Wiffles, who thought that now the moment had arrived for him to be rewarded for his appearance at Mrs. Ashe's party, and for the horrors of his sacred duet on that occasion, made his appearance at the entrance of the anteroom, evidently prepared to carry off Grace for the following dance. Wiffles was any thing but brilliant, and he struck Grace as being in a state of chronic surprise at his success as a talker. A halting conversation had just ended in the promise of the wished-for waltz, when Rex came back with the ice, and did not seem particularly delighted at finding the *tête-à-tête* so abruptly concluded. At any rate, he felt that so good a partner was worth striking a bold stroke for.

"Why, Miss Featherstone," he cried, "you know you promised me an age ago. Just look at your card."

Poor Grace knew well enough that his name was not on it; but in the hurry and excitement, and the

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fear of displeasing Reginald when he had been so kind, and the wish to dance again with him instead of the stupid officer prevailed, and she stammered an assent, and, blushing scarlet, took Reginald's arm. As he led her away, his hardly-earned prize, she felt that they were more confidential than ever, and the consciousness, though a little alarming, was far from disagreeable.

"I hope," said Rex, "you are very much obliged to me for the rescue, considering I had to tell a story to effect it."

"Yes," said Grace; "but it was not a story, for I am sure Mr. Wiffles did not believe a word. How dreadfully angry he looked."

"Did he not?" said Rex; "and, I dare say, is meditating the most sanguinary revenge. Very likely we shall have a duel outside after you're gone home, and if I fall, as of course I shall, you will have to break your heart, and come with early flowers to deck the grave where valor and innocence repose."

"To be sure," cried Grace, "and keep a lock of your hair to cry over whenever I feel inclined to forget."

"Would you?" asked Rex.

"Yes, of course."

"Well, I will give you something to put it in, at any rate, in case any thing happens. We will go back into the ante-room after this dance, and I will present it with due solemnity, and receive your

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blessing on my arms, for all battles to come, as your true knight."

And so the locket was given and received, and that night lay close and pressed to a little foolish fluttering heart, where every thing was in the utmost confusion, and Rex, we must fear, already sat enthroned as lord supreme.

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CHAPTER XV.

APRÈS.

GOLDEN lads and lasses come, we know, like the rest of their species, to a dusty end; and the morning after a good ball is apt to be a weary and uncomfortable period of existence. Last night was all poetry and excitement; to-day is the most revolting prose. The carpenters are busy stripping down wreaths and tinsel; poor Wiffles is making his head ache by trying to bring the Bachelors' accounts right by rule of three, and has just paid the band, that lovely band, in cold, hard, unromantic sovereigns. At the Rectory, though it is ten o'clock, the world is only half awake.

A great deal of irregular tea-drinking has been going on in people's bedrooms, and there has been smart skirmishing on the stairs between ladies' maids bearing the precious beverage and Mrs. Ashe, who looks upon green tea as the bane of the present generation, and thinks that if people are strong enough to go to balls, they ought to be strong enough to be down to prayers, and to come with her and have a famous bathe before breakfast —that was what she used to do when she was a

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girl! The ball-goers, however, are slow in making their appearance. The males are last, of course. In the middle of his last delicious doze, there comes a wonderful knocking at Rex's door.

"Robert and Rex are two lazy men," cries a child's voice outside, "and they lay in bed till the clock struck a quarter past eleven. And aunt says, please will you make an effort and be ready for luncheon at two."

"Go away!" shouted Rex from under the clothes.

Batter—batter at the door.

"No," cried the assailant, "you're to get up, Rex."

Rex saw that resistance was vain, and farther repose out of the question, and so resigned himself to his fate. Half an hour later he joined the rest at breakfast. Every body seemed too tired to do any thing but gossip; and the archdeacon was thoroughly inquisitive, and kept the stream of conversation constantly on the flow.

"The way in which those Miss M'Turbots dance," Rex said, with a languid air, "is really perfectly frightful; it strikes me that they have been but recently reclaimed from their native wilds, and are as yet unaccustomed to the encumbrance of dress and the restraints of civilization. They ought to be painted red and strung with beads, and turned loose into a wild Indian war-dance, not into a Christian ball-room."

"Talking of paint," said Wynne, "how extremely well Lady Trumpeton looked, did she not?"

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"How can you be so horribly ill-natured, Mr. Wynne?" said Rachel. "What do people come to the sea-side for, if not to get a healthy color?"

"And what do literary gents go to balls for," said Rex, "if not to say the most vicious things they can think of about their neighbors? I like all the Trumpetons very much except old Sir William, who certainly is intolerable. Miss Trumpeton is all that heart could desire; and she and I amused ourselves most profitably in admiring the vigor with which the two M'Turbots laid siege to Major Foppington, and in speculating which of them would be the first to carry him by storm."

"Yes," said Robert, "their gallantry in action was really splendid; they both deserve him. Upon my word, it is hard that there should not have been either two Major Foppingtons or one Miss M'Turbot."

"Grande certamen," said the archdeacon, his eyes twinkling with satisfaction, "tibi præda cedat major an illi. And now, Rachel, tell me about your quadrille with the Sclavonian minister."

"No," said Rachel, "I don't think I will, to punish you for making those stupid Latin jokes, that none of us can understand."

"Very well," said the archdeacon. "We are to be allowed no classics, then?"

"Except Lucretius," cried Rex; "some of us are very curious about him. I promised one of my partners last night to initiate her into Stoicism this very day."

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"Do not quote it, then, I warn you," Rachel said; while Grace bent her head down, and seemed suddenly to become intensely interested in her bread and butter.

"Rachel has a great turn for despotism," said Rex, "has she not, uncle?"

"Of course," said the archdeacon: "tuus, O regina, quid optes, explorare—but I am breaking the law already. What I mean is that her sex entitles her to be tyrannical, if she chooses."

"And of course she does choose," said Robert. "'I have no men to govern in this wood, that makes my only woe.' Cleopatra's was no doubt a common taste."

"Most wars have been about women," said Wynne.

"To be sure," cried Rachel; "they were the things best worth fighting about."

"Yes," said Rex; "ancient wars and modern diplomacy,

> In ante-rooms we wait,
> While ladies interpose and slaves debate."

"Which was the lady and which was the slave in the ante-room last night, I wonder," said Wynne. Grace blushed, and Rex apparently had talked enough about the ball.

"For slaves," he said, "I propose reading priests, the most willing and obedient of slave-drivers. Priests and ladies are no doubt the managers of the species, and the keys of statecraft."

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"Now, uncle," said Rachel, "we are allies; and, as I am going on to the sea-shore to sketch, I commission you to be my champion."

"Your champion?" said the archdeacon, who had taken up that morning's *Chanticleer*, and had not listened to the last sentence; "and for what, pray?"

"To assail the gray pre-eminence of man," cried Rachel, turning back at the door, and looking as like a princess as any one could wish, "and to prove that Grace and I are the two most useful people in the house."

"Useful and ornamental too, I am sure," said her uncle, as Rachel closed the door; and, indeed, as to this point of the controversy, it is probable that the archdeacon would have found his companions, however disputatious about other matters, pretty much of his own opinion.

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CHAPTER XVI.

DE PROFUNDIS.

A DISCONTENTED and irreligious writer, whom happily the improved morality of the age has consigned to well-deserved oblivion, used to say that life was like a journey down into the country, and that the farther one left the capital behind the more intolerable did the discomforts of each stage become: the dust was thicker, the posting worse, the ruts jolted more cruelly, the road-side accommodation grew scantier, till at last the weary traveler came thankfully to an end, and accepted the prospect of even the most inhospitable quarters with a certain sort of satisfaction at having done with so thankless and heart-wearing a business. Every cheerful mind would deprecate so depressing a comparison. In our ill-natured moments we may fancy that every thing goes against us: the stars in their courses may bend a malign influence on our fates, the world may seem ingeniously contrived *pour nous faire enrager*, and men but the wretched victims of its degradations and inconveniences; but presently the clouds break, the sunshine lights up our very grievances into something pleasant and

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picturesque; we pass twenty people on the road faring worse than we, and so preach ourselves a homily on the absurdity of grumbling, banish weariness or melancholy with the best cheer our purses allow, and go about our business without farther protestation or complaint.

If Wynne kept his grumbling to himself, it was not because that part of the journey about which he was just now engaged was especially smooth or pleasant walking. His third decade was already half completed, and the romances of an imaginative youth had been effectually put to flight by the prosaic realities of later years. Success, which once looked so close, had receded as he reached his hand to clutch it. The excitement of a career seemed closed against him. The victories of college had been followed by a long period of defeat, or rather the chance of battle was denied. One by one bolder or more fortunate adventurers caught him up, traveled an hour or two in his company, and passed on, leaving him far behind. Interest, good luck, a ready affability, a keen eye to the opportunities which perhaps come only once in a lifetime, the unabashed hardihood of inexperience, the very appearance of prosperity, carried one man after another well forward toward the wished-for goal. Wynne was lagging in the race; he felt it, and ran worse than ever: *possunt quia posse videntur;* and, on the other hand, the suspicion of failure makes success doubly improbable. He had waited for fortune's

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smile through weary months and years, and had come at last to acquiesce in her chilling frown as a matter of course. He was heart-sick with hope so long deferred; he had begun to disbelieve in efficacious obstinacy, and to bend all the strength of his nature to secure, if not content, at any rate indifference. And now for weeks past the sentiment had been growing upon him about which indifference is most of all impossible. Every day carried Rachel closer to his heart; every word she spoke assured him of some new element of congeniality; her mirth and her melancholy alike harmonized with the different phases of his own temperament; now her pathos touched him to the core, and now her very presence was infectious with high spirits and daring. The old ambition, well-nigh lulled asleep, burst out again, and with something of its former fire, in the neighborhood of so noble a prize. Resignation, after all, is the virtue of the old and weak, and no man has a right to it on this side of forty. Indolence is half-brother to despair. The fault is in ourselves, not in our stars, if we are underlings. Life has so much that is worth the winning, that it is well at any rate to try to the end, and to stake one's last piece in case the luck may turn, and the game yet be ours. Wynne, who came of an ancient and somewhat dilapidated family-stock, was but slenderly supplied with the first essential of all successful campaigning, and had acknowledged a compulsory bachelorhood as his ap-

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propriate doom. Never till now had he felt inclined to rebel. Rex and he had often laughed together over the scanty stock of sovereigns which secured profusion for his simple tastes, but would have figured contemptibly enough in the clauses of a marriage settlement. Wynne's balance at his banker's was an uncertain wavering sum, which forever flickered like some feeble flame trembling on the verge of absolute extinction. It had been an old joke. "Poor devil," Rex used to say, "your case is really heart-breaking. Driven by sheer starvation into being brilliant in the *Chanticleer* three days a week: we see the blackest side of poverty, don't we? Nothing crueler about it,

Quam quod ridiculos homines facit—

that is, obliges them to be funny against their will."

"At any rate," said Wynne, "it is far better than doing rule of three in Lombard Street, and satisfying one's literary ambition with defunct checkbooks and the bad half of the *Times*, as I found you last time I came to the bank."

"Never mind, old fellow," the other would answer, "I shall allow you a pension as my future biographer, and meanwhile I vote for a quiet dinner and a bottle of Christopher's to keep up our spirits."

This time, however, Wynne was beyond the reach of such easy consolation. It no longer seemed a laughing matter. Real feeling can not be dispatched with epigrams or sneers; sentiment and

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philosophy are by no means equal foes, and here philosophy had made a poor fight, and was now beating a shameful retreat. The dilemma was a distressing one; to go or stay was equally difficult. Prudence suggested flight, and day after day Wynne determined on departure, and still lingered on, till at last the summer was drawing to a close, and the break-up of the whole party would speedily supersede the necessity of his infirm resolution. Already the days of pleasure were numbered. Robert was to start to join a reading-party of Oxford friends for the last few weeks of the vacation; Rachel was going to stay with the duchess; Rex had a long list of shooting engagements, and could not possibly wait a day after the 1st of September. The feeling of the end being at hand was beginning to throw a shade of melancholy over every enjoyment, and to invest the mere routine of every day with a new importance. The last days are often the pleasantest, and, viewed from this bright holiday atmosphere, the old monotonous London life seemed doubly unattractive. Rachel's spirits, too, were not improved, and she would not have acknowledged to herself how much she dreaded the summer's ending. Her mental unrest made excitement a relief; and when the duchess had proposed to take her away with her, she had gladly accepted the prospect of a change of thought and circumstance. Roehampton Castle was but a few miles from Oldchurch; a generous hospitality reigned in its am-

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ple halls; and a varying stream of entertaining visitors promised the best chance of escaping from troublesome reflections, a melancholy humor, a harassing uncertainty, a half regret. There are some secrets which escape all the more from over-careful concealment, and a labored affectation of indifference may sometimes be to discerning eyes the surest symptom of a conscious attachment. Both Wynne and Rachel were constantly endeavoring to show how extremely little they cared about one another, and they might well hope to impose upon every body but themselves. But between them the truth was too subtle not to escape. A single look may undo the work of a whole week's reserve. Conversation may be cold, rigid, and studiously superficial, and yet a single sentence suddenly breaks down another barrier, and opens up a new field of sympathy and confidence. Rachel knew well enough that the dean was not her only lover, and every now and then, in spite of timid watchfulness, she caught herself saying something which implied the knowledge. The very embarrassment which each afforded the other was convincing proof enough of how matters really stood between them. The merest commonplaces were commonplace no longer; the most trivial incidents seemed to suggest the possibility of a scene; the ordinary courtesies of life acquired a new meaning, and sometimes could scarcely be performed without a strange effort. Rachel, for instance, had asked for her

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sketch of the picnic, in order to fill in some lacking figures of the group, and to improve at leisure upon a hurried performance; and now she could scarcely summon courage to return it to its owner, and did so at last with an almost distressed confusion that to an ignorant looker-on would have seemed entirely unintelligible. Strangely enough, the one person at the Rectory upon whom the truth had even glimmered was the archdeacon. Perhaps his very simplicity led Rachel into being unguarded in his presence; perhaps a delicate and watchful instinct made him conscious of something which checked her mirth and colored her former openness with a tinge of reserve; perhaps, as Wynne was thoroughly to his taste, the wish was father to the thought, and the archdeacon only fancied what he hoped some day to see. Rex never had a suspicion of his sister's feeling, and made a point of publicly congratulating Wynne on his successes at the ball, and upon one compliment in particular about which he might well be conceited, and of which every body else, and especially Rex himself, had every right to be jealous. In the course of the evening there had been a cotillon, and Grace, whose talent for such matters had become immediately conspicuous, had been enthroned in state as queen of the occasion, and intrusted with the mirror in which the aspirants for her hand were to read their doom. The occasion was one after Grace's own heart. All the coquette arose within her. One by one the

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hopeful faces peered over her shoulder into the glass and saw themselves brushed mercilessly away; the long train of victims swelled far behind her chair, and concealed their disappointment with the best grace they could. Major Foppington and M'Turbot stood foremost in comical humiliation; then came some of the Russian gentlemen, ejaculating in Sclavonic as to the depth of their despair. Rex had fared as badly as the rest, and retired blushing into the background. At last Wynne had been led up to the ordeal, and Grace laid down the mirror, where no sentence but rejection had hitherto been found, got up from her throne, and glided away with her chosen partner amid the surprised and envious crowd.

"I hope you feel duly flattered, Mr. Wynne," she had said as she looked up at him in smiling triumph. "As you have not asked me to dance of your own accord all the evening, I was obliged to seize my only opportunity."

"I am Corentino in the play," Wynne answered, with a laugh.

"Ch'è forza danzar,
Et niun mi soccorre.

I may well be frightened. I suppose you know that you have made me at least ten enemies for life."

"The dangers of eminence," said Grace; "but the next valse you wish to dance with me, you must not wait to be invited."

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Rex had so often alluded to the matter since that the whole thing was probably a conspiracy of his own; and, indeed, the idea of Wynne's flirting or being flirted with by any one seemed to him so wild and extravagant a suggestion that it could be joked about with safety, and Rachel's searchings of heart were more utterly confused than ever from the fancy gradually creeping upon her that a certain sort of admiring intimacy had grown up between the two natures whose very dissimilarities might perhaps be the secret of unconscious attraction. She could not conceal from herself that the very thought made her miserable.

A few days later some official matter brought the dean to Westborough, and he felt that it would be hardly courageous not to show himself upon the scene of his recent repulse. It would attract attention, too, if his intimacy seemed to come to an abrupt and unexplained conclusion, and he was anxious above every thing that Rachel should perceive that he was not in the least broken-hearted. Her decision had, of course, been a great annoyance; it was a pleasant scheme defeated, and a desperate stab to the vanity of a man long accustomed to success and admiration. But the dean had no intention of dying of his wounds. He was too busy, too vigorous, too full of resource, too much interested in life, for melancholy to mark him as its own, or to allow him to sit nursing his disappointment. As the effervescence of the temporary excitement died

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down, the residuum of feeling was more resentment than regret. After all, there seemed plenty of ground for consolation; perhaps, even, he had had a lucky escape; very likely Miss Leslie would have thrown the deanery into disorder, flirted with one of the minor canons, or done something or other absurd and objectionable. At any rate, married life would have entailed a great many inconvenient social obligations, from which the dean felt especially glad to be exempt. Mrs. Ashe would have been forever coming over to see her niece, and disturbing the tranquil atmosphere of the Cathedral precincts with some irregular benevolence; that rackety young Leslie and his chattering bride would, no doubt, have taken Oldchurch in the course of their honeymoon. Then there would have been twice as many stupid dinners to undergo, and morning calls, and disturbed evenings, and a hundred other vexations. The dean quite congratulated himself upon so fortunate a deliverance; and, though Oldchurch seemed a shade duller, the bishop decidedly less intelligent, and the choristers and organist more slovenly than ever, the dean used to step manfully up to his stall, and sit through the service with the utmost resignation. He would have sunk in his own esteem if a foolish woman's caprice had sufficed to disturb his mental balance, or to rob his energetic existence of its zest. He made it a point of honor to be in high spirits, and, if he could not avoid failure, resolved at any rate to ignore it.

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The business of the day dispatched, the archdeacon brought his guest back to the Rectory, and as Mrs. Ashe was at her schools, and Rachel had persuaded the rest of the party into starting for a sail, the two divines sat down to luncheon *tête-à-tête*, and chatted on till the afternoon was far spent, and the conversation took an interesting and confidential turn. The archdeacon, in the innocence of his heart, imagined that he might make a few inquiries about something that just then especially interested him, without arousing the suspicions of his sagacious companion.

"Apropos of college," he said, "I suppose you were in residence when my nephew and Wynne were up at St. Benedict's?"

The dean said that he believed he was, but Wynne and he had never met before that summer.

"A very nice fellow, I think, that Wynne," said the archdeacon, trying desperately to assume an air of indifference to the matter, and to talk as if for talking's sake.

"Very intelligent and well-informed indeed," said the dean; "and he had rather a high reputation at Oxford, I believe. The master of Benedict's was writing to me about him, and—dear me, there is Mrs. Ashe passing the windows; I am fortunate not to have missed all the ladies."

"Well," said the archdeacon, whose interest was now too much aroused to allow of interruption, "the master was writing to you, and said—"

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"And said—" answered the dean, getting up to meet Mrs. Ashe at the door—"oh, every thing that was agreeable—talent, industry—rather a curious history, too, I assure you. How do you do, Mrs. Ashe? The archdeacon and I have been doing justice to a most excellent repast in your absence. You see I have not been able to keep my good resolution about staying at home; Westborough is absolutely irresistible, and I shall have to get the bishop to lay it under an interdict, and keep me firm to my town life."

The archdeacon broke in impatiently. "The dean was just telling me about Mr. Wynne's college career; you see, dean, it is most satisfactory to me to hear about it, as he is so intimate with my two nephews, and, indeed, between reading and talking, Robert is hardly ever out of his presence. I confess I am deeply anxious."

"A most natural curiosity indeed," said the dean, wondering what in the world could be the reason for so sudden an inquisitiveness.

"But now," said Mrs. Ashe, "I want to take you both to the pier: Mrs. Leslie and the young people are to land there, and I promised that we would go down and meet them; and besides, Mr. Dean, our pier is one of our greatest lions."

The dean's politeness accorded a ready assent, and the trio forthwith set out upon the expedition.

The Westborough pier was well worth a visit: it was the most striking result of the prevailing en-

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ergy which was constantly exploding in some fresh undertaking: it would have seemed quite dull to go for many months without a new design. The inhabitants enjoyed seeing bricklayers and carts, and gangs of laborers, and piles of masonry and scaffolding about their still recent squares and terraces; they liked to feel that the place was growing; they were proud to see their bounds enlarged. There was a Local Improvement Committee, where this spirit was especially active, and which disposed, with a privileged freedom, of any private interests that stood in the way of a contemplated change. Its conceptions were bold and its zeal unflagging. It paved roads, and cut new paths along the cliff, and put up seats at good points of view, and planned esplanades, and laid out so vast a sum in green and white paint every spring for the beautifying the public posts and railings, and in whitewashing every possible material that was capable of receiving that chaste form of embellishment, that the jaunty appearance of Westborough was at once accounted for, and it became no wonder that it so sparkled and glittered as quite to dazzle the vision of London visitors, whose eyes had for the eleven preceding months been accustomed to the dingy atmosphere of that fuliginous metropolis. Just now the absorbing interest was the pier, which was to curve round outside the little breakwater, which at present protected such small craft as could safely get within it, but which every patriotic inhabitant had long

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felt to be intolerably inadequate for the growing necessities of a prosperous port. All through the summer there were crowds of workmen driving in the piles and fixing the foundations of the nobler fabric; little tug steamers flashed hither and thither, panting and groaning with their heavy train of stone-laden barges; huge iron cranes hoisted the blocks high into the air, and swung them with a crash into their destined position; here a forge had been fitted up, and busy artificers were torturing the glowing bars into due form amid a cataract of sparks. Every where industry was at fever point, and a crowd of idlers collected day by day to watch the progress of the work, and to forget their own *ennui* in the spectacle of other people's activity. The dean was in the greatest good-humor, and skipped nimbly over beams and planks, examining one detail after another with the greatest curiosity. The afternoon was inspiriting; a pleasant sea-breeze bore in upon the coast, and made the hot sun a perfect luxury; the music of the band on the esplanade came fitfully across the bay in pleasant snatches, now swelling high for a few bars, and now dying away again into silence; all the beach seemed a revel of babies and nurses; the crazy machines were staggering backward and forward with constant relays of persevering bathers; donkeys, half concealed under huge saddles and brown Holland hangings, were cantering heroically through the sand; half a dozen yachts were dashing about in

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capricious tacks in the distance. Presently the Rectory boat rounded the corner of the breakwater, and the dean helped Rachel up the pier steps with such entire composure and *sang froid* that she felt that her alarm at the idea of an interview had been rather groundless, and that there was evidently not the least chance that any thing embarrassing would occur. The dean was laying himself out to be agreeable, and was as brilliant and entertaining as if no single cloud had ever darkened the sunny atmosphere of his existence. Rachel felt that he was, at any rate, well-bred and skilful, and admired his entire self-command, contrasted with the irresistible nervousness against which she herself was struggling, and which it required her utmost efforts to conceal.

"You have just come in time," said the dean, "to add your voice to ours, and to exercise your authority with the archdeacon for the public good. I have been in vain endeavoring to persuade him to preach next Sunday in the Cathedral, and now, with you for an ally, I have no doubt I shall carry the point."

"I am delighted, at any rate," said the archdeacon, "to hear that the special services are a success. Fancy, Rachel, the whole nave quite full of working-people. I am sure I could never make myself heard."

"How odd it sounds," cried Rex, "a crowd in a Cathedral! What a jar to all one's old associations."

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"In this case," said Rachel, "the association is not so very old, and is so disagreeable that one is delighted to part with it."

"Of course one is," said Rex, "for the general interest of the community; still, one can not help feeling it strange at first. An Englishman's idea of a Cathedral is necessarily that of something solemn and roomy, with an empty, swept and garnished sort of air, a strong staff of vergers, an imposing army of choristers, canons, and other performers, and two or three, most probably two, for a congregation. Is it not?"

"Yes," said Wynne; "that was a witty idea of some one's about religion seeming to have shriveled up and got too small for its covering, like a dried kernel in a nut."

Rex laughed. "The Church," he said, "is getting old and thin; 'her well-saved hose a world too wide for her shrunk shanks.'"

"One always has a sort of feeling," said Wynne, "that we Protestants have not come by those grand buildings properly. The hose did not belong to us, to begin with, and never fitted. Do you remember Macbeth's awkward plight—

> "Now does he find his title
> Hang loose about him, like a giant's robe
> Upon a dwarfish thief?"

"Do you observe how severe lawyers always are upon us unfortunate churchmen?" said the dean, appealing to Rachel. "For my part, I think it most

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fortunate that we have found so good a use to make of Cathedrals."

"Most fortunate indeed," said Mrs. Leslie. "Reginald, I am sure, did not mean any thing disrespectful."

"No more did I," said Wynne; "it is absurd to imagine that a system is extinct just because it gets a little out of use here or there."

"You are right, Wynne," said the archdeacon. "One must not despair too soon. I remember a story I heard in Scotland of a mother who apologized for herself and her husband having murdered their baby by telling the judge that 'she was no thriving, sae Sandie slew her.'"

"Shocking indeed," said the dean, with a laugh; "there is always something traitorous in too prompt resignation. M'Turbot was telling me the other day of a countryman of his whom one of his ancestors condemned to be hanged, and when he showed symptoms of objection to his fate, his more philosophical spouse, probably the same as the one with the baby, encouraged him with 'Gang up, Donald, mon, and dinna anger the laird.'"

"As stories seem the fashion," said Wynne, "what do you think of the party of fine gentlemen at Paris who supped while one of their friends was dying in the next room, and drank a merry toast, 'à la santé de notre aimable agonisant?'"

"We are all better friends to the Church than that, I am sure," said the dean. "And, my dear

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archdeacon, you must come next Sunday, and tell all our radical mechanics about her numerous excellences."

"I am a most devoted churchman," said the archdeacon.

"But not High-churchman, dearest?" said his lady, who thought it was high time to make a stand for the Dissenters.

"No, no," said the dean; "only in the right sense. We all dislike the flowers and candlesticks; and do you know, Mrs. Ashe, the young clergymen at Oxford actually have their hoods sewn inside out, just from sheer perversity, and the ends of their scarfs embroidered, or hemstitch is it?—something, at any rate, just like a lady's pocket-handkerchief."

Mrs. Ashe sighed; and the dean observed that Wynne and Rachel exchanged glances as he talked.

"That violent school," he continued, "is really beyond all patience. They are worse papists than the Pope himself. They remind one of Hannibal, don't they, archdeacon?

Jam tenet Italiam: tamen ultra tendere pergit.

That is, Mrs. Ashe, they go over to Rome, and can not be content even then."

"Or else," said the archdeacon, "they stay with us, and perpetuate the worst defects of Catholicism, without any of its wholesome discipline. I wish heartily we had a Jesuit superior to keep our Tractarian curates in decent order."

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"I am glad to think," said Mrs. Ashe, "that at Oldchurch Oxford is more worthily represented. Mr. Atherton is, at any rate, entirely rational."

"Yes, indeed," said the dean; "and last Sunday he quoted two very fine passages out of his new book with immense effect, I assure you."

The speaker here looked up, and saw Rachel's and Wynne's eyes again meet, and flash out some secret sympathy. By this time he began to understand the catechizing to which he had that afternoon been submitted.

"Anxious about his nephews, indeed," he thought, as he recalled the conversation; "even the good archdeacon, then, is as great a hypocrite as the rest of us."

During the conversation the whole party had moved away from the landing-stairs and reached the portion of the pier which was still unfinished; here the planking ended abruptly, and farther progress could be effected only by clambering along the beams which sprang from pile to pile, the huge limbs and sinews of the future building. These were indeed tolerably wide; the dean was adventurous, and urged advance. Below them the waves were boiling up in picturesque indignation, and the strong tide rushed with a noisy swiftness between the unaccustomed obstacles which checked its course. The dean was a little over-acting his part, and professed the most unnatural interest in carrying their explorations as far as possible. He insist-

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ed on acting as pioneer, and, with the exception of Mrs. Ashe and her sister, both of whom had a family failing for turning giddy on the smallest provocation, the rest of the party followed cautiously in his steps. Some cruel sprite must have hovered at his ear, and prompted more than ordinary hilarity in ironical satisfaction at the approaching catastrophe; or possibly the exuberance of his spirits may have robbed him of due caution, and so contributed to his fall. Be that as it may, he was just crossing to the last row of piles, and was in the very act of firing back a bright repartee at the archdeacon, when a treacherous spar slipped from under his foot—the balance which had been so gracefully maintained was irretrievably lost—no fortunate barrier arrested his descent, no watery goddess stretched her hand to save, and Lycidas the next moment had sunk into the flood, and was seen at intervals emerging to the surface in attitudes more completely impetuous and undignified than any of which he probably had ever before been guilty during the whole of his decorous existence.

"Great heavens!" cried the archdeacon, completely paralyzed by his superior's unlooked-for predicament. "Here, Wynne, tie your handkerchief to the end of my walking-stick—quick, quick, my dear fellow."

"He can't swim, apparently," said Wynne, slipping off his coat, and taking a great spring from where he stood in the direction of the dean.

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Rachel turned pale, and clung to the archdeacon's arm as she saw him disappear. Two or three vigorous strokes, and a long rolling wave carried Wynne close upon the scene of the dean's evolutions, and as he passed the sinking man felt his firm grip upon his neck, and clutched his preserver's arm with all the agonized energy of despair. Wynne held him off as far as he was able, and struck out strongly with his free arm.

"Keep still, man," he cried, as he gave the other a fierce shake, and freed his limbs, now half entangled with his dangerous burden.

"Pray keep still," ejaculated the archdeacon, hopelessly pushing out his walking-stick in the direction of the swimmers, and held firm by Rachel from endangering his equilibrium.

The dean, however, was deaf to all sounds but the horrid noise of waters in his ears, and clung to the one solid substance which met his grasp with unreasoning tenacity. By this time, however, Wynne had got him within the piles, and Robert had lowered himself down to the water's edge, and in a few seconds more had dragged both of them out of the surf upon the rough masonry of the pier's foundation. The dean lay half exhausted on a smooth rock, and recovered his almost stifled breath and exhausted energies. His mind, however, rushed over every detail of the occurrence with a vehemence only intensified by unusual excitement: presently he cast his eyes up to where Rachel was standing, pale and motionless; the earnest greeting which

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her look bespoke was not, he felt, bestowed on him; the last tinge of uncertainty died instantly away, and the conviction flashed upon him, like a sudden pang, cruel, resistless, that Rachel's refusal had contained a two-fold element of humiliation, and that he had now been rescued by the last person in the world to whom he would have chosen to owe his preservation.

The archdeacon was in a most wonderful bustle. "Now, dean, take my arm—get into the fly—put my coat over your shoulders—drink this hot brandy—you don't like brandy! nonsense, nonsense—pray drink it at once; you must have had a terrible shock—and you too, Wynne; jump in quick, before you get cold." Wynne, however, chose to walk rather than sit in his wet clothes; so the archdeacon went off with his charge in the fly, and Rex and Wynne ran across the sands by a short cut to the Rectory garden.

"Well," said Rex, "he was wishing for a dip the other day, and circumstances obliged him before he expected. By Jove, I thought he'd be drowned."

"Oh, he's not for drowning, you may depend on it," said Wynne, shaking off the water that was trickling down his sleeves; "his constellation is not a watery one."

"Well," answered the other, "at any rate we have passed our clerical witch through the drowning ordeal; I was quite relieved to see him sink like a good Christian."

"Merses profundo, pulchrior exiet," said Wynne.

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"You should have felt him kick, though. I fully thought he meant to drown us both."

When they got home they found that the dean had been put to bed and thoroughly warmed, and was not a bit the worse for his immersion. However, it was decided he had better not come down to dinner; and the archdeacon divided his time between visits to the invalid's bedroom and vehement demonstrations of thankfulness for his friend's escape from so imminent a catastrophe. He abounded in congratulations and applause; described every event of the afternoon with the greatest emphasis to each new-comer; lauded Wynne's prompt jump as if it had been that of a second Curtius; and insisted at dessert that every body should join in a toast to the heroes of the occasion.

"Come," he cried, "we must drink our dean's good health, and yours too, my dear Wynne, custos virorum mercurialium. I am sure we all owe you a thousand thanks: dear, dear, to think what a gap it would have made! What a blessing to know that we have him safe up stairs!"

As the dean lay, pleasantly reposing amid all the luxury of pillow and curtain in his hospitable quarters, he meditated at his ease on the events of the afternoon, and in particular analyzed his feelings toward his deliverer. Wynne had insulted him in conversation, outrivaled him in love, and had now put him under a lasting obligation. What three better reasons for hating a man could a vain, sensitive, and fastidious nature wish to have?

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CHAPTER XVII.

CLOUD.

THE traveler in mountainous regions, who turns his back upon some lovely valley, with its vineyards and pastures, babbling brooks, and lawn-like meadows, and clambers up a wild hill-path into the world of mist and cloud, avalanche, snow-storm, or precipice, is apt to look back with a half incredulous fondness upon the delicious scene of peace and brightness left but so short a while before. As he plods through the drift, or creeps with cautious steps along the smooth brow of some icy steep, or wanders on hour after hour through the solemn silence of some solitary table-land, his thoughts go back to the trellised vine that overshadowed his cool morning meal, the pleasant laugh of his host, the cheery farewell at parting, the greeting from groups of peasants on his journey's earlier stage. So our remembrance of the bright times of life is often half obscured by after troubles. We look back to our holiday seasons through a stormy atmosphere; they seem to have belonged to dreamland, so utterly have they passed away, so unlike is the present hour, with its cares, and hopes, and re-

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grets, to the golden past of our recollection. So far do we feel to have left behind us the mirthful ease of the land of long ago.

Some such sentiment as this must in after years have colored the Leslies' retrospect of this portion of their family history; for an event just now occurred which seemed, as it were, the landmark which denoted their entrance upon a gloomier and less tranquil region than that through which we have hitherto traveled in their company. From this point their course grew steeper and rougher, and bore the frequent signal of some tempestuous visitation. The beginning of a great sorrow was close upon them. Sunshine still filled the air, but the first heavy drops, as of some bursting storm-cloud, were already falling around, to give signal of approaching danger. Was it but the reaction from yesterday's excitement, or an infectious melancholy which Rachel and Wynne unconsciously diffused around them, or a delicate instinctive sense of future calamity, that threw so strange a gloom over the evening after that of the dean's adventure, when the party gathered in the Rectory drawing-room, as it turned out, for the last time? or was it merely the physical oppression of the sultry summer night, and of the load of electricity which charged the burdened air and filled the horizon with constant spasms of light and low rumbling murmurs of distant thunder? Every body seemed disposed for quiet: Rex asked for some music, and threw him-

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self on the sofa to listen; Grace moved quietly away to the open window, and Rachel struck the first welcome chord of a familiar air. It was just what they wanted, all felt at once; congenial silence is often the best of luxuries, and now, as Rachel sang one of her pathetic ballads, and the languid pleasure of the tune crept unawares over the listener's sense, what depths of tenderness and sorrow did it not seem to stir. Music always tamed Rachel in her wildest moods. She felt its mournful side most, and so she sang.

The song ended, and Grace still stood at the window, gazing out into the night, lost apparently in some deep reverie. What fate did she read in those pale stars that here and there shone out between the sombre masses of cloud, as the last faint rays of the daylight died slowly away? What strange destinies were in store for her?

"You must come and sing to us," Rex said; and Grace, startled from her dream and off her guard, hurried to the piano, and rambled with nervous hand over the keys, as if in search of the melody in which her mood could find expression.

"Will you sing our old friend out of the *Figlia?*" said Robert. "It is always welcome, and this is quite the occasion for a good-by song."

"We must not get too sentimental," cried Rex. "Suppose we have Rataplan, Miss Featherstone, and I will be the sergeant, and as devoted as you please. You must help me out with my notes."

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But no; for once Grace was obstinate, and had already begun the first notes of that most touching of airs in the prettiest of operas,

Convien partir, o miei compagni d'arme,
Et d'ora in poi lontanda voi fuggir?

"Addio, addio, convien partir?" cried Robert, as she came to a close; "that is really rather harrowing; the regiment, I am sure, could not possibly spare you."

"No," said Rachel, bending forward and taking Grace's hand within her own to be petted and caressed; "how prettily you sang it, and what a dear little grave body you look to-night."

"Elle a des larmes dans sa voix," said Rex, rousing himself from the sofa to the unusual effort of a compliment; "your soldiers would all be broken-hearted at the bare idea of a departure."

Years afterward every note of that song used to ring in the memories of more than one who were among the listeners, as the sad twilight died slowly out, and the shadows gathered deeper and deeper around, and Grace slipped silently away to the window, and was as deep again in the stars as ever.

Afterward the party broke up. Every body was gone but Grace, who lingered behind to put away her songs. Rex came back into the drawing-room, and found her so employed.

"Well," he said, with a half sigh, "so much for the first adieu of the season. Henceforward leave-takings will be the order of the day. I hope you

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are sufficiently sorry for us poor people who have to go."

"And you for us poor people who have to stay," said Grace, smiling rather ruefully across the piano; "we are the ones who suffer."

"Suffer!" cried Rex, with a rather sad laugh; "I am sure I feel low enough about it to-night. I wish to goodness I had not to start to-morrow."

"Don't start, then," said Grace, coloring up with excitement, and seemingly half unconscious of her words; "it is far pleasanter with you here."

"You make it doubly hard to go," said Rex; "that's rather cruel, as I am pledged."

There stood the little enchantress weaving the magic meshes around her helpless victim. Rex felt the spell creeping over him; resolution wavered, prudence hushed her ineffectual monitions, conscience in vain whispered a stern veto at his charmed ear. Grace was looking far too romantic for reason to have a chance of a hearing.

"Ah!" she said, "that is how your lives are so different from ours: you go from one country house to another, you have a change of amusements and interests, you see new faces and make new acquaintances, and one pleasure is soon forgotten in another. We have only one phase of life, and when a happy time is over, we can only remember."

"And you think you will remember?"

"If I am to be honest, yes—and good-night."

"And if I am to be honest," said Rex, holding

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her hand in his, "do you know I would rather talk to you for five minutes than run the round of all the country houses in Christendom; and as for forgetting you, why, I've been trying to do it all the summer, and I don't suppose I shall begin to succeed now—shall I?"

Grace's soft eyelashes were glistening with tears, and her head drooped in the most picturesque affliction; she gave a little sob, and it went like a love-charmed dagger to Rex's tender heart.

"Could I help it?" he went on, half addressing his companion, half apologizing, as well he might, to his own scruples; "was it my fault that we have been getting better friends every moment since you came here, and that now it seems I can't be happy out of your sight, and every thing you say and do is just absolute perfection?"

The tears flowed freely, the sobs grew more heart-rending, the attitude was more pathetically expressive. Rex's last spark of wisdom was dead. Despite of bars, and chains, and careful watchings, an imprisoned passion will force its way to light. Accident strips off our masks. Circumstance tricks us into being ourselves. The love which had lurked, and smouldered, and crept, burst out at last in a long, tender kiss: "Darling little Grace."

A pretty group—nature, sentiment, impulse. And in the background cold, stern reason, inflexible duty, determined judgment—in other words, Mrs. Leslie in the doorway.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

STORM.

"UNGRATEFUL, wicked, indelicate."

Such were the first sounds which impressed themselves distinctly upon Grace's consciousness after the surprise and alarm of so unfortunate an interruption. Mrs. Leslie was standing over her, white with anger, her resolved, unflinching nature written unmistakably in each clear, strongly-marked feature. Grace shrank before her pitiless, searching glance.

"You know how guilty you have been."

"Guilty?" cried Grace, starting up with a gesture of surprise.

"Guilty," said Mrs. Leslie, as though pronouncing her doom; "what am I to think? What do my eyes tell me? You have committed a wicked theft; you have done her that was as my daughter the greatest wrong that one woman can do another —a cruel, treacherous wrong. You have disgraced us all; you have darkened this house with a great impropriety, perhaps a great crime."

Grace's eyes flashed with passion.

"No," she cried, "I will not hear it. I scorn to

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contradict you. It is you who are cruel and wrong. How can you bear to speak to me so? I will darken your house no more; let me go—to-night—*this* minute."

"You shall go to-morrow," said Mrs. Leslie, unmoved. But Grace's heroism had spent itself in a single effort, and she could bear up no longer; she burst into an uncontrollable fit of crying, and, bending forward, buried her face in her hands in an agony of humiliation.

Outside the night was so quiet; the clouds had cleared away, the air was exquisitely still; the moonlight slept along the garden terraces and the silent downs beyond, and the long white ridge of sand that marked the water's edge. And in-doors what a tempest was raging, what joys were being shipwrecked, what precious freights thrown overboard by trembling hands in the wildness of despair.

Rex's interview with his mother was less demonstrative. She knew he must be managed, and was accustomed to the task. She knew he was no hero, and was hardly surprised at a fresh symptom of infirmity. He acknowledged at once that he had done excessively wrong, claimed for himself a larger share of blame than maternal partiality was inclined to allow him, and fell easily into the arrangement which Mrs. Leslie proposed. Grace herself wished to depart directly, and was to go at once to her aunt; Rex must faithfully promise never to see her

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again—for her sake, and his own, and Ella's. Rachel should never know of it; and Rex breathed more easily at the thought. "Was he," his mother asked, with an unconscious contempt mingled in the earnestness of the inquiry, "was he quite certain he was in love with Ella?" "Yes, of course," Rex said, promptly, and Mrs. Leslie went to bed with a lighter heart, and hoped that at any rate she had made the best of a bad business.

Grace meanwhile was hastily preparing for the morrow, and, though indignation still burned high, her real predicament presented itself every moment in a truer and more painful light. Her conscience, though she tried hard to discredit it, was not quite clear. Mrs. Leslie's accusations, though very exaggerated and cruelly drawn, had a disagreeable element of truth in them. There was the horror of it. Grace could not deny to herself that she had felt a satisfaction in the homage paid her by Ella's lover —Ella, who had slighted her so, and was so unkind and stupid. She had never realized it to herself, or thought it out so far as the matter had reached that night; but still the thought had been there, lurking serpent-like—the sweet revenge, the flattered vanity, the deliciousness of triumph. Alas! alas! It was all true, then, that Mrs. Leslie had said—all horribly true. "I have been a wretch!" Grace cried, as she sat in despair in her dismantled room and recalled Mrs. Leslie's dreadful words—"a mean wretch! and oh, how miserable I am!"

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CHAPTER XIX.

RACHEL'S SORROW.

GRACE was not alone in her remorse; both Rex and his mother had uneasy consciences. Mrs. Leslie, though she felt clear as to having acted wisely, could not forget that the punishment was falling heavily on the least guilty of the offenders. When her anger was passed she felt that it was so. It might be expedient and necessary that Rex should not suffer, but it did seem hard that Grace should pay, by darkened prospects and an altered career, for an inconsiderate, foolish act, which, perhaps, was more another's than her own, and, at any rate, was the fruit of a moment's folly. There was something heartless, too, in sending away this poor little friendless creature out into the world alone, all the more so if she were in disgrace. She chose to go, certainly, but why? Mrs. Leslie blushed to herself when she remembered that it was her accusation, perhaps a false one, that was driving her away. If Rex's heedless self-indulgence had brought about a perplexing domestic entanglement, was it not cowardly and wrong to solve the difficulty at the expense of the one of all the party who was starting

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in life at the greatest disadvantage, and to whom any additional obstacle must prove of the most momentous importance? On the other hand, she was resolved at all hazards to carry through the scheme of Rex's marriage, for which she had hoped so ardently, and which she now felt more than ever to be the only chance of keeping him out of harm's way for the future. He had been so steady since his engagement, and seemed to find the quiet home-life of the Rectory so entirely congenial, that she had well-nigh lost sight of another and less agreeable phase of his character. But the scene which she had just witnessed assured her that his purpose was as infirm, his passion as vehement, his desire of gratification as reckless as ever. It was fortunate that his attachment to Ella still lasted on, and Mrs. Leslie clung desperately to this last resource. This was the lever by which his moral nature might be moved; this gone, and his mother saw failure, disappointment, disgrace, hanging like dark clouds over his future. Rex would never be safe alone; he would repent, and re-repent, and die the same, and Mrs. Leslie shuddered at the prospect of the renewed anxieties and heartaches which seemed to be opening upon her should the chief good influence of his life be suddenly withdrawn. Her one important object was to keep the matter as little talked about as possible. Grace's sudden departure would of course excite curiosity, and its reason be guessed at; but no one need know the precise truth

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about it. Rachel especially was to be kept in the dark; she was certain to be inconveniently absurd and romantic in a matter where romance had to make way for practical expediency. Very likely she would take Grace's part against her brother, and raise a hundred difficulties in the way of her quiet dismissal. Mrs. Leslie knew that there was an element of injustice in the case which Rachel would never forgive, and which in her hands would be exaggerated into very undue importance. Perhaps, too, as she had never been ardent in her admiration for Ella, she might incline her brother in the direction least conformable to his mother's wishes, and would certainly not scruple to urge him to break off his match, if she once had a suspicion that the most scrupulous honor demanded such a sacrifice. She would bid him to question his own heart more strictly than Mrs. Leslie thought might just now be entirely advisable. The position was certainly an embarrassing one; it would be difficult to tell just enough, without letting the rest escape; Rachel's inferences would be so quick, her inquiries so pressing, her feeling so vehement; Mrs. Leslie found that she dreaded an interview with her daughter more and more, and determined at last upon sending a note the first thing in the morning, in which the disagreeable intelligence might be safely announced, and the dangers of any conversation on the subject judiciously avoided.

Accordingly, the ultimatum was dispatched, and

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Rachel, on awaking, found it lying by her pillow's side. She read it through twice before its full meaning broke upon her. Something, it said, had occurred which made it seem best for Grace to go away; Grace felt so, and had herself decided upon the time. Rachel must trust her mother, and be content to let the matter rest there; if there was a mystery, it was not for mystery's sake, but because Mrs. Leslie had decided that the subject was one about which it could only do harm to talk. Rachel was not to think that any thing very dreadful had happened, or that any one was much to blame, but only that it had seemed well to act decidedly at once. Lastly, Mrs. Leslie entreated that no mention of the matter might be made for the future, either to herself or to any one else. Grace had come unexpectedly, and staid a few weeks, and might now, naturally enough, when their party was breaking up, go on to her original destination. Her visit had been a very pleasant little episode, and every body must feel an interest in her, Mrs. Leslie as much as any one; and the best way that they could all show their affection was by acquiescing in the present arrangement without farther discussion.

While Rachel was slowly recovering from the disagreeable surprise which so unexpected a communication was likely to produce, Grace was busied with the last preparations for her intended journey. It was fortunate for her that she had not too much leisure to think, and that the excitement of the oc-

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casion and the necessity for action came as a welcome relief to the gloomy reflections, the fears and regrets, the shame and remorse, that had seemed so overwhelming a burden through the sleepless hours of the night. Her brain seemed still reeling from the sudden shock of yesterday's catastrophe. Those soft, tender words, that loving kiss, the terrible interview that followed—each scene rushing so quickly upon another, with its own crowd of sentiments and associations, and each by force of contrast intensifying all the rest, had stirred the lowest depths of her nature, and still kept her whole being in a tumult of excitement. A great gap lay between this morning and all the past; the charmed weeks that had floated by so dreamily, so enchantedly—the ready hospitality, the delicate sympathy—the watchful kindness that had made her life of late so smooth, all seemed to belong to a world that was no longer her own. She was disgraced, and disgrace was ruin. The fair edifice of memory, lately so bright, was shattered to its very foundations, and crumbling into blackened ruins, disfigured, blasted. A dreary future stretched away before her: this was her first essay at independent life, and ended thus soon in shameful failure. When again would fortune provide her with such another home? How doubly delightful it all looked now—how hard to have lost it all—how wretched to have deserved to lose it!

Grace glided down the stairs where they had lin-

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gered so often wishing merry good-nights. In the hall lay the cloaks, tossed carelessly down at the end of yesterday's expedition; there hung the long string of sea-weed which the children had brought home in triumph, still fresh—yes, for it was only yesterday—and yet what centuries between then and now! What glad companions then and tender friends! How solitary to-day! Outside how charming the garden looked, steaming in the bright morning sun—the deep shadows falling across the glistening turf and smooth walks—the old gardener at work just as if nothing had happened—farther away, a group of sailors spreading out their nets to dry, and filling the still morning air with the cries that seemed so pleasantly familiar—well-loaded fishing-boats dropping lazily shoreward—beyond, the bay, and a packet steaming noisily away into the horizon—every where peace and comfort, and the blessed routine of a happy life, except for her. And for her all the chains which link the several parts of existence together suddenly snapped. Every thing seemed to mock her. Is it not so? When one's inner life is in some tumult, and the mind sorely perplexed—when one's thoughts are tempest-driven, does not the outer world, going on its way with its accustomed serenity, seem to add a sting, and act as a bright background to bring out the sharp outline of one's disasters, and aggravate the horror of the picture by the dismal contrast? We can not fancy, in such a case, how we ever came to

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wish for a change, how it was we ever wearied of the precious life that is now overclouded. What would we not give for one more of its many old ordinary days? We held them so cheap; and now, if begging and praying could but win us one more, but one more, now that we know that they have passed away forever!

Rachel meanwhile seemed more and more overpowered by the shock which her mother's unlooked-for announcement had given her; its complete surprise, its studied vagueness, the certainty that some terrible misadventure lay beneath, the stern decisiveness that spoke in every sentence, each added to the horror of the whole, and her nature shrank before it, and was bowed down to the very dust with distress and humiliation. The brightness seemed suddenly to have faded out of her life; a dark, overshadowing cloud had crept across the summer sky; she felt that some evil thing had been among them; she was haunted by an indistinct consciousness of neighboring crime; the innocence and joyousness of their old life, the accustomed luxury of intercourse, unembarrassed and unconstrained; the effortless simplicity of confidence and love, seemed to have been mortally wounded by a mystery which all should agree not to explore, and a topic of conversation to which no allusion must for the future be made. It was in vain to try to acquiesce in the tantalizing deception, half light, half shade, in which, at present, the matter rested; they

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might be silent about it, but who could check the uneasy searchings of inquisitiveness, the hurried flights of imagination, all the rebellious struggles of outraged nature against an artificial oblivion? who was the wrong-doer, who had so silently yet so effectually brought about this unexplained catastrophe? whose was the ruthless hand that had struck this cruel, jarring discord into the prevailing harmony? Rachel turned first to her brothers, and dismissed the supposition in an instant. For months past she had never thought of Rex except as betrothed to Ella, and as thoroughly sincere, if not very demonstrative, in his devotion. Robert was too transparently good and simple to allow of the possibility of his offending in the slightest degree against the severest code of honor, delicacy, or sentiment. Was it—and the hot blood dyed Rachel's cheek deep red as the conviction flashed upon her—was it the man whom she had been so nearly loving, whose offense, or whose readiness to offend, was the occasion of their present trouble? Could it be that the subtle attraction of affinity, which, in spite of herself, had drawn her daily closer to Wynne, was a mere delusion? Were treachery and hypocrisy to be added to the other shameful elements of the story? Rachel bit her lip with vexation, and the hot tears gathered in her eyes as she recalled the times in which the accidents of conversation or the routine of life had seemed to betray them into the awowal of common interests, sympathies, attach-

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ments. She reproached herself with bitter self-accusation for expressions which, at the time they escaped her, she had felt to be generously indiscreet. The chilling admonitions of prudence rang again in her ears. She had given an insight into the very parts of her character which most shrank from careless revelation. Every occasion, every word, every look, came back to her now with agonizing distinctness, exaggerated by the very distress of which they were the occasion. She had uttered, she felt it bitterly, what was irreverence for all but worthy listeners. Who was he that had heard her? She had exchanged confidences, and what had the trusted friend now proved himself to be? What were other friends if this one had utterly to be discarded? would life be any longer worth having, worth enduring, with such a shameful disappointment, so disastrous a loss? Rachel answered herself honestly —no; and felt now, at the very moment when it was expiring, how deep and passionate was the attachment that had that morning received its deathblow.

Presently she went to the window, and suspicion was turned into certainty. Grace was standing at the carriage door, tearful and excited; by her side —another; yes, Rachel had known it would be so full well. She could bear to see no more; she turned away, and threw herself upon a sofa, sick at heart, faint beneath the burden of sorrow.

Had Wynne by chance looked upward to her

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window, he would have seen a face hurriedly withdrawn, as if from some intolerable sight; surprise, humiliation, and misery were written in every feature—the surprise of an unexplained disaster, the humiliation of a wasted devotion, the misery of a disappointed love.

The three men were to have started in a day or two upon their travels, and as the remaining period did not promise to be very agreeable, a prompt departure was speedily determined upon. Rex gave Wynne a hint that matters were not going quite smoothly, and that they had better be off. All three could go in company that afternoon as far as Oldchurch, and then, if Wynne pleased, he could go on with Robert to Cumberland. Wynne, however, was obliged to go back to town, but was quite prepared for an immediate start. Rachel did not make her appearance; the morning dragged wearily away; and Rex, who seemed bent on keeping up people's spirits, insisted upon all of them going to wish the Trumpetons good-by by way of killing time. Here they broke in upon a pretty family scene—Lady Trumpeton was busied with a large piece of embroidery; both the young ladies were at the open window, sketching the boats on the shore; and Atherton, who had been honored by an invitation, was reading Mr. Tupper's *Proverbial Philosophy* aloud for the public benefit. The Leslies, however, were perfectly welcome, and Atherton was the only one of the party who seemed at all disconcerted by

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the interruption. Lady Trumpeton was extremely good-natured, scolded Rex for deserting them so early, and told Wynne that he was to come and call upon her when she came to town, and Robert too, provided he had got a first-class.

"I have been hearing about you, Mr. Leslie," one of the young ladies said to Rex, "from Mr. Wiffles; you are going to win a million on Tartarus next spring, are you not?"

"Yes, a million," said Rex, laughing; "Wiffles' imagination is perfectly prodigious; he is quite Miltonic in his grandeur."

"Or Tupperian," said Wynne, catching sight of the volume in front of Atherton.

"Yes," said Miss Trumpeton, gravely, "Tupper is excessively imaginative, and Mr. Atherton reads it beautifully."

"I wish we could stop to hear," Rex answered, as he rose to go; "but we must hope for that pleasure next summer, if Mr. Atherton has not previously been made a bishop."

When they reached the Rectory they were surprised to learn that Rachel had ridden away to spend the day with the duchess, and had asked her mother to wish her brothers good-by for her, as she should not be home till the evening. The archdeacon appeared absolutely disconcerted, and wished them a ceremonious farewell, extremely little in accordance with his ordinary geniality. Mrs. Ashe and her sister looked harassed and excited. Rex

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in vain endeavored to joke away the prevailing discomfort. Every one was relieved when the moment for departure arrived, and the last day of the summer seemed darkened by a gloom which was all the more painfully perceptible from the vain attempts which were made to ignore its existence.

That evening Wynne found himself once more in his old quarters at the Temple, and in a pleasing melancholy let his memory travel over the period which has just closed with such mysterious abruptness. The mystery was complete. Rex had declined to talk of it. Grace had wished him goodby as he met her at the Rectory door, but had explained nothing. Rachel's absence seemed to bespeak some serious trouble. Apart, however, from this perplexity, there was more than enough that was pleasant in his reminiscences; and we may leave him contentedly building such air-castles as fancy is so eager to suggest, and hope so ready to embellish with her brightest colors for the spiritual residence of a courageous lover.

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CHAPTER XX.

THE DEAN'S DINNER.

THE late autumn was rather a fashionable time at Oldchurch; the neighboring country houses were full; cold winds and shortening days had driven people away from the sea-side; Continental tours were ended; most of the Cathedral clergy were in residence. The festival was generally the precursor of other festivities. Sir Million Muddlebury, as member, had given a grand ball; the bishop had had two receptions; and before Rachel had been a week at Roehampton, the duchess told her that she had promised to go and dine at the Deanery, and that it was such an amusing house that she was determined that Rachel must come too; in fact, she had promised the dean, if possible, to bring her. Rachel was far too embarrassed to do any thing but assent. No decent pretext for escaping presented itself; and the duchess was delighted to have a companion for what would otherwise have been a solitary drive, as the duke had the gout, and was completely immovable.

"You look uncommonly frightened, my dear," she said, as they were going into the Deanery draw-

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ing-room; "are you afraid of the dean, you who are generally so courageous?"

Rachel laughed, and said she was not in the least afraid; and the dean met them at the door, and did the honors of the occasion with the most graceful politeness. It was a very nice party, small and good. The guests were well assorted, and showed each other off to advantage. Betty Raffish came among the rest, and enjoyed herself extremely at dinner in quizzing Lord Buzzington, who sat next her, and whose solemn way of talking she caricatured most amusingly at all the parties she went to for a month afterward. Sir Tertiary Bounce, who was going to read a paper on geology next week before the British Association, was eloquent about the Oldchurch strata; a successful barrister, fresh that day from town, told some good stories about the last election petition, in which he had defended Sir Million. The bishop arrived in due time, and gave the duchess a great deal of interesting information about the new reformatory, and the capital answers that the naughty little boys were in the habit of making when he examined them. Atherton, we may be sure, was not there; the dean was too well versed in the philosophy of agreeable parties to endanger the success of the evening by the presence of so dangerous an element.

And now suppose that dinner (an uncommonly good one) is safely over, and that the gentlemen of the party, having imbibed a sufficiency of admira-

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ble claret, have found their way up to the drawing-room. The duchess and Rachel were on the sofa together, and the dean came at once to make himself agreeable. He felt just then essentially Conservative. Sir Tertiary Bounce had been talking nonsense down stairs about the working classes. The Oldchurch Radicals had been opposing the Cathedral improvements. Aristocratic sentiment is extremely infectious; and the dean knew the duchess's mood, and threw himself at once into harmony with it: in many ways it was congenial to his own, at any rate for the moment. He is a Tory; he shrinks from startling news; he shudders at paradox; he deprecates violent language; he is a little amused at the headstrong impetuosity of young people: like the duchess, he belongs to the past, and, above every thing, dislikes vulgar jokes.

"I want you to tell me about Mr. Atherton's book," the duchess said. "I have been reading a terrible attack on it, quoted in this morning's *Gazette* out of some new paper; I forget its name, but it was evidently very violent and disagreeable. I often ask the duke to give up the *Gazette*, for, though its politics are right, its spirit is thoroughly irreligious."

"If it was an article from the *Chanticleer*," said the dean, "your grace must not be surprised at its being violent; that is the fashionable way of writing at the present day."

"Was it the *Chanticleer*, Rachel?" said the duchess.

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"Yes," Rachel answered, with a stammer and a blush, which the dean's quick eye caught, and which convinced him of what he had already shrewdly suspected as to the authorship of the offending article. "Wynne, without a doubt," he thought to himself; and one thought quickly suggested another. A fresh motive was added to his original inclination to defend Atherton to the duchess. To begin with, he had been disposed to attack the *Chanticleer* before her; but to have Rachel listening to him, and to be able to abuse his successful rival to her, without her suspecting that he knew what he was doing; to stab her all over with bitter sarcasms and sneers, and for her not to dare to flinch from the cruel wound; to approve himself to the duchess's taste, and, at the same moment, to take revenge for Rachel's indifference, seemed to the dean a most fortunate combination of good opportunities; and he would have been more than human if he had not availed himself of so happy a conjuncture on the spot.

"Mr. Atherton," he said, pleasantly, "has, at all events, the satisfaction of suffering in good company. For a man to be attacked by the *Chanticleer* is merely a signal that he has, in some way or other, commended himself to the respect or affection of his countrymen. Nothing is too good or great to be exempt from its maliciousness; I assure your grace I should not be the least in the world surprised if they were some day to attack our dear bishop."

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"Shocking!" said the duchess. "Do you know, Mr. Dean, the duke thinks that ever since the Reform Bill there has been an increasing tone of levity and wickedness in the literature of the day. You see, the House of Commons, being essentially vulgarized, must give a bad tone to the rest of society."

The dean thought it certainly must; but he had no intention of letting his victim off just yet.

"Yes," he said, looking at Rachel to see how she liked it, "the spirit of such criticism as that on our friend Mr. Atherton is vulgar and stupid; it bespeaks a low tone of feeling and a second-rate order of ability. It sometimes makes me quite unhappy to think of the young men that must be employed upon such a paper, because it is clever—that is, dashing and vigorous; but its tone is deplorable—yes," added the dean, as if gauging the merits and demerits of the offending journal carefully in his own mind, "I am sure I do not wish to be harsh, but I confess I do think its tone is deplorable. I hope I am not uncandid."

"I am sure you are not," said the duchess, quite delighted. "So, Mr. Dean, there is not any thing really in all those objections that are mentioned—those about the mistranslations, for instance?"

This was rather a perplexing question. Nothing but the exquisite satisfaction of having Rachel writhing before him could have supplied the dean with the requisite energy for the occasion.

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"Finding fault is such an easy trade," he said, "such a very easy trade; and discussions on scholarship are proverbial as much for the emptiness in which they result as for the animosity with which they are conducted. It is not for the *Chanticleer* to lay down the law on scholarship. Mr. Atherton must know what he is about, for I have heard your grace say that his allusions to the original text of the Greek Testament formed quite an interesting feature in his Wednesday and Friday lectures?"

"Very interesting indeed," said the duchess, delighted to find her own side of the argument so capitally supported; and the dean, having now thoroughly got his hand in, set to work to convince his companion, by the most irresistible proofs, of that which she was already so anxious to believe. He had a most vigorous little campaign against the iniquities of the *Chanticleer;* he showed how it had garbled the quotations, how it misrepresented the whole tenor of the work, how this parallel proved too little, and that analogy too much; he twisted it, and tortured it, and bespattered it with ridicule, and, in fact, quite won the duchess's heart by soothing all her alarms as to the genuineness of her idol, and made Rachel thoroughly uncomfortable by obliging her to see the absurdity of hers. It certainly was one of those fortunate *coups* of which any man may justly be proud.

"That must be the paper," said the duchess, lowering her voice, "that abuses poor Lord Buzzing-

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ton so cruelly; and how wrong it is, for, though he may not always be quite wise, he is, I am sure, the very soul of philanthropy. Why, only this summer the pineries at Bumblebee Hall have been all shut up, and the proceeds laid out in a translation of Watts' Hymns for the poor Yata-haws, that interesting tribe, you remember, who ate the missionary last year, and afterward so nearly exterminated themselves in a civil war about his clothes."

"I had forgotten the incident," said the dean, whose vindictiveness toward Rachel and politeness to the duchess were now nearly exhausted; "but I can imagine Dr. Watts having a very soothing effect on a barbarian intellect — there is something so plaintive in the rhythm. At any rate, I trust the hymn-books will be more politely treated than the poor missionary. And yet what a glorious end! Eaten alive, I think you said! How tame and selfish do our lives seem when compared—dear! dear!" and the dean sighed, as if it were only by a sublime moral effort that he could abandon the alluring idea of so delicious a fate, and reconcile himself to the prosaic enjoyments of civilized life, and the prospect of one of the conventional forms of dissolution and interment.

"Well," said the duchess, "I am quite relieved to hear what you think about Mr. Atherton, because we value him so very much, and think so highly of his powers. The duke often wishes he was not in orders, that he might put him into Parliament. He would be invaluable there, I am sure."

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"And yet no one can wish him otherwise employed than at present."

"No, indeed," replied the duchess; "it is quite a cause of thankfulness: to think that such a man should be criticised!"

"That habit of criticism," said the dean, "of looking out for the weak points in good and useful people, and dwelling strongly upon them, is certainly a very dangerous employment."

"And a very wicked one," ejaculated the duchess.

"Yes," answered her companion, thoughtfully, "I think one must say wicked—wicked and foolish. I dare say your grace remembers the lines out of *Macbeth* which Dr. Johnson so well applies to insignificant critics of great people; it is mentioned as a portent that

> 'A falcon, towering in its pride of place,
> Was by a mousing owl hawked at and killed.'

Unhappily, in our days, the phenomenon is of too frequent occurrence to be accounted prodigious."

"It is particularly absurd in Mr. Atherton's case, because there can not be two opinions about his powers. How admirably he managed that stormy meeting the other night!"

"Ah!" said the dean, "so I heard; quite a shocking disturbance."

"Shocking indeed," said the duchess, "but for his presence of mind and conciliatory manner. He somehow always manages to convince his adversaries that it is well he should be listened to patiently."

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"I am sure," said the dean, putting on one of his most innocent looks, "no one can be more interested than Mr. Atherton's opponents in securing him a fair hearing."

"No, indeed," rejoined the duchess, in happy unconsciousness; while Rachel, her patience at last fairly exhausted, dashed a contemptuous glance at him, and, moving away to the table, began to amuse herself with the photographs which were strewed about it. She soon came upon a familiar scene; the Italian was still hanging over his victim, with hungry, murderous eyes, and the wicked smile of revengeful satisfaction. The horror of the picture seemed greater, and the resemblance, observed of old, more striking than ever, and Rachel said to herself that it must either be the devil or the dean.

Meanwhile, Lord Buzzington had taken possession of Rachel's empty chair, and the dean, who had been watching his moment of escape, glided gracefully away, and set about making himself agreeable to his other guests. He succeeded to perfection. He talked to the bishop about a new anthem played at morning service last Sunday, and expressed his fears as to whether the first chorister's voice was not breaking; he asked the lawyer's opinion as to the legal bearings of the Hottentot Disabilities Bill, and suggested a clause on which Mr. Jeremy Diddler, the leader of the opposition, made one of his most striking speeches the next session. He chattered for five minutes with Sir

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Tertiary about a petrified toad recently found under the Cathedral belfry; and then, for he felt tired and wanted amusement, he made for Betty. She was in great force, and quite prepared to be amusing and amused; she gave him the last Oldchurch scandal, joked about the poor curator's persecution, thanked the dean for having sent her in to dinner with so brilliant a companion as Lord Buzzington, and presently lighted upon Atherton.

"Ah! Mr. Dean," she said, "you know all the literary news, tell me who perpetrated that cruel onslaught on our Oldchurch pet? It is so horribly malicious that no one but a personal friend could have devised it, and it is so profane that I think it must have been written by a clergyman."

Betty always got as good as she gave in her encounters with the dean.

"You forget," he said, "that there is another hypothesis, grounded on the sex of the writer, which might account for its ill-nature as well as its impiety."

"Whoever wrote it is certainly not an angel in temper."

"Certainly not," said the dean; "the *Chanticleer* possesses the faculty of using strong language to a degree that is quite gratifying to contemplate. I am informed all the wild beasts of the Establishment are kept chained up in separate dens, and have authors tossed in to them between the bars, and no one but the most determined, able editors dare go near them."

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"There's a well-trained malevolence about it that is positively refreshing," said Betty. "When I come into the Cathedral late on Sunday mornings, Mr. Dean, you may always know I have hit upon something unusually vicious and agreeable, and have been enjoying it over my chocolate."

"It is just as well you should not come till after the absolution," said the dean; "I might feel embarrassed in pronouncing it in your presence."

"If you are not polite, I won't come at all. I'll patronize some of the Dissenters. I have a great mind to become a Swedenborgian along with the curator, and spend my Sundays between mysticism and butterflies."

"No, no, we can't afford to lose you. I shall have you reviewed in the *Chanticleer*."

"God forbid!" said Betty. "If it once took me in hand, I should never have any more peace."

"I don't suppose you would. That's one of its weaknesses. If its sarcasm has a fault, it is its profusion. It's one of those very good things that one does not like to have too much of, like Curaçoa."

"Or Lord Buzzington's conversation," said Betty, taking a look through her glass in the direction of that ponderous peer, who was prosing the duchess into a comfortable after-dinner nap.

"Ah!" said the dean, "poor Lord Buzzington has a sad time of it in the *Chanticleer*. I do not in the least sympathize. He is tedious, certainly; but you know we are none of us perfect, except, of

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course, Miss Raffish. For my part, I look upon him as a national institution. I am a Buzzingtonite, and should no more think of being irreverent or funny about him than I should about the Bank of England, or the Channel fleet, or our bishop here, or any other great, solemn, respectable fact."

"I dare say not," said Betty, with an innocent look. "Well, I agree with you—Lord Buzzington is my particular pet, and the next time I am in town I intend to stop my carriage and send my footman to have his shoes cleaned by one of the Royal Blacking Brigade, just in order to show my approval of aristocratic philanthropy."

"I should think Lord Buzzington will be extremely gratified at such distinguished patronage. It will no doubt become quite the rage, and the Blacking Brigade will make their fortunes."

"Well, I am determined to be good," said Betty, "like the rest of the world. Can you put me in the way of starting a reformatory?"

"If charity was not proverbial for beginning at home, I should have no difficulty in the world."

"Now you're going to be uncivil again; you had better stop at once."

"You forget," rejoined the dean, "that I am professionally bound to preach to you now and then."

"Yes; but only at the Cathedral, if you please, and then I can attend or not, as I choose. I declare I am becoming as great a victim as Lord Buzzington or poor Atherton."

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"Well, well," said the dean, "I dare say it would do none of you any harm. 'Le sang qui coule, est-il donc si pur?' *Their* martyrdoms, at any rate, we must not regret. The blood of the saints, you know, is the seed—"

"Hardly of the Church in this case," said Betty; "a dissenting chapel might spring from it, or a whole wilderness of Spurgeonic tabernacles, ready armed for a Romanist controversy, like the warriors from the dragon's teeth."

"Ha! ha!" laughed the dean, "and all ready to destroy one another in default of better victims. As to poor Atherton, I really do not see the use of making such a fuss about murdering a man who has so effectually committed suicide. No one can possibly treat him half so cruelly as he treats himself; he takes the most infinite pains to show how completely in the wrong he is; and I defy the most deluded of his admirers to agree with more than a third of his book, because the facts condemn the arguments, and the arguments refute the conclusions."

"Yes," said Betty, "he is really most amusing. An argument with him is downright delicious. He won't let you escape refuting him, do what you will, and ingeniously puts himself in positions in which it is impossible for his most lenient adversary to help knocking him down. It reminds me of those two Americans who fought a duel in a dark room, and one of them fired up the chimney so as to do no harm, and, to his consternation, brought down

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his opponent, who, unfortunately, had clambered up there for security."

"Capital!" cried the dean, laughing. "Like our friend, he emerged from the engagement not only wounded, but begrimed; not only with a bullet through his body, but with a great deal of soot on his clothes. Atherton's defeats are always routs, not only disastrous, but disgraceful."

"And then his effrontery!" cried Betty, who seemed to have got her hand in for a little sharp artillery practice; "it really is astounding. Just as there are persons who commit the oldest sins the newest sorts of ways, so there are writers who array the most reverend errors in the latest fashions; and when one had hoped the poor old things were dead and buried, lead the wrinkled, grinning wretches about society with as much parade as if they were at blushing seventeen, and had only come out this season."

The dean was getting a little wearied, and had had nearly enough.

"Yes," he said, "of course he's absurd enough, and so, in all conscience, is his reviewer. Fleury says about the Church that it was as badly attacked as it was badly defended; and, really, one feels that nothing can be more preposterous than Atherton's theories, except the arguments employed to overset them.

"'If Marius scribble in Apollo's spite,
There are who judge still worse than he can write.'"

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"Oh," said Betty, "I am sure I did not mean to disparage Mr. Atherton. I'm very fond of him. There's one thing, at any rate, about him that I like. He is thorough. You know where to have him. He has good ascertained party views. He is not one of your quasi-Liberals, who are always disappointing one by not following up their positions; who, after sniffing at half the heresies in and out of Christendom, come home and make a hearty meal on the conventional creed; who go about casting naughty looks at all sorts of forbidden beauties, and when one thinks one is sure to have a delicious piece of scandal, come sneaking back to their first loves with a hang-dog look to kiss and be friends, and try to make believe that nothing has happened."

"No wonder they feel awkward," said the dean, who knew well enough that Betty was sneering at himself. 'On craint toujours de voir ce qu'on aime quand on vient de faire des coquetteries ailleurs.' Still, you know, one feels indulgent toward the Don Juans of the intellectual world. Their children are often very useful members of society, and the world is, after all, nothing but a successful compromise."

"To be sure," said Betty, "calling a spade a spade is one of the worst social outrages that a man can commit."

"So it is," answered the dean. "It is absolutely necessary to have gentle names for things; it keeps the peace and makes matters generally comfortable.

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Positivism, you know, is an agreeable drawing-room phrase for—ahem!"

"I know," said Betty, quickly. "Don't mention it to ears polite. By the way, Mr. Dean, I am becoming a great physical philosopher myself. What do you think of the nebular theory—all the worlds flying off in rings, you know, from the central chaos? Is it not charming?"

"In rings?" said the dean, as if he had never heard of it before. "Oh, I am a great believer in rings, especially marriage ones!" and Betty, who was as little partial to matrimony as the dean to speculation, hastens back to the subject they had just left.

"As to marriage," she said, "the worst of it is that those poor theological flirts we were talking of just now sometimes come very badly off at last. They have so many different likings that they never arrive at a real 'grande passion,' and make themselves agreeable to so many opposite sorts of people that they end by being really friends with none."

"Dreadful!" exclaimed the dean. "Like the ladies Pope talks about,

> 'In youth they conquer with so wild a rage
> As leaves them scarce a subject in their age.'"

"How dare you quote that horrid poem to me?" cried Betty. "I'm sorry to find you have read it. There's not a word of truth in it, you know. Why, what do you think of 'Most women have no characters at all?'"

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"What *can* it mean?" asked the dean. "Characters from their last places? Because I don't suppose all women have these, have they?"

"I shall expect you to write mine," Betty answered, with a laugh, "when I want to be recommended to a quiet husband."

"Don't let me see you asleep at service, then," said the dean, "or I shall be embarrassed between my veracity and my politeness."

"Are you often embarrassed, Mr. Dean?" asked Betty.

"Yes," said her companion; "I'm constantly frightened out of my wits by you."

"In order to get over your ingenuous timidity," said Betty, "mind you give another party as soon as possible, and ask me. If you get any body else better worth having to dinner, I'll come in my sedan in the evening along with the other unnotables. I declare I have been quite amused."

"At satirizing all us poor clergymen. How cruel!"

"I really haven't yawned for more than two hours," cried Betty. "If we go on at this rate, Time will run back and fetch the golden age when men had brains and manners, and women were allowed to talk about something else besides babies and morality."

"Nothing but babies and morality?" cried the dean. "The conversation must naturally be a little dull for those who don't happen to be troubled

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with either. Yes, society is dull. We are a degenerate race."

"There are some brilliant exceptions," said Betty. "I see you have asked no one here to-night who is not either handsome or witty."

"Except a favored few," said the dean, with his pleasantest smile, "who combine both recommendations."

Betty, who had painted herself up capitally for the occasion, and was as "bien conservée" as any old lady of sixty need wish to be, makes him a gracious courtesy and wishes him good-night.

"My carriage is here and I must be off," she says. "I mean to have two chapters of the *Lingerer* read to me before I go to bed."

"Are you driven to such violent narcotics as that?" said the dean, as he gave her his arm. "Pray be careful. Good-night;" and Betty clambers into her old chariot, and, as she lies muffled up in a corner, mentally pronounces the dean very agreeable, and smiles rather ruefully as she thinks how, five-and-thirty years ago, she used to cut jokes and bandy compliments with the fine gentlemen of a departed generation.

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CHAPTER XXI.

AN UNLUCKY ENCOUNTER.

THE winter was a prosperous one with Wynne. Life no longer seemed an uninteresting affair; the old melancholy was gone. Pleasant memories, a good hope, a newly-born sentiment stirred up his tardy nature to energetic high spirits. Clients, too, began to find their way to his door, and Wynne won two verdicts with considerable *éclat*. The chief justice made him a complimentary speech in court; the chairman of the Grand Mudfordshire Railway Company was an old friend of his father, and as the Grand Mudfordshire was delightfully litigious, and always resisted compensation to the surviving relatives of demolished passengers, Wynne found his hands full of work, and his excuses for being in bad humor very fast disappearing. "Res age, tutus eris," is the Roman moralist's suggestion for escaping the solicitations of sentiment; but Wynne's unaccustomed diligence made him, it must be confessed, none the less anxious for the Leslies' return. On the contrary, the first gleam of prosperity gave his day-dreams a more definite outline, and seemed to place them already within the confines of the

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possible. When success is clearly worth winning, the prize in sight, the means at hand, a man must be a poor creature indeed whose blood is not warmed at the prospect of the encounter. Wynne's ambition, no doubt, kept pace with his triumphs, and each new stroke of good fortune fed its flame with new fuel. He saw little of his old companion; the Bathursts were in town, Ella was addicted to Christmas parties, and Rex was expected to shirk no invitation which promised him the enjoyment of her society. He was tolerably heroic, but used sometimes to whisper a confidential murmur into Wynne's ear as to the fatigues of a protracted courtship. He was not, in fact, sufficiently enthusiastic not to repine sometimes at the burden and restraint of his present position. Fast parties were made up, to which Rex was no longer considered admissible. Then Ella was a capital partner, and it used to be great fun to carry her off from a roomful of jealous rivals; but it was rather serious to have to be devoted throughout a whole evening. Ella used to accuse him, half playfully, of being a shameful flirt, and Rex felt that the reproach was too true to be very agreeable. Meantime she revenged herself by all sorts of intimacies, which she knew her lover disapproved, and with which, still half playfully, she was accustomed to tease him. Captain Tarefield was often in London, and had improved his Westborough acquaintance into complete familiarity. He and Rex constantly found themselves

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bound for the same parties, and Ella scarcely accorded a heartier welcome to the one than the other. Mr. Bathurst did not seem anxious to hurry on his daughter's marriage, and both she and Rex acquiesced in the delay with complete contentment.

"Hulloa, old boy!" Wynne said to him one afternoon as they met on the club steps; "what do you think has happened?"

"I don't think at all," said the other. "Tell me quick, or I shall expire with inquisitiveness. Some one dead, perhaps?"

"Well, yes," answered Wynne, "one of my uncles is dead. Now you're not to laugh; he died last week, and—"

"And has left you some money," cried Rex; "you need not tell me: I can see it in your eye. I hope it's plenty."

"Eleven or twelve thousand pounds," answered Wynne; "I don't know what you call that."

"Bless him!" Rex ejaculated with the greatest fervor. "But, my dear old fellow, how on earth do you mean to spend it?"

"I have not the slightest notion," answered Wynne; and as he had been employing most of the day in calculating how far it might go with his own earnings to make a decent income, and in determining forthwith to propose to Rachel, this must be considered as about the biggest fib that Wynne ever perpetrated.

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"Die and endow a college or a cat, I suppose; or, if you take my advice, lay it all out in backing Tartarus, and be the great Turf millionaire of next summer."

"Going to dine here?" asked Wynne.

"No such good luck," said the other; "I have made a rash promise to go to the play with the Bathursts, and shall spend the evening in the back of their box, inhaling hot gas, bad sentiment, and worse jokes."

"Lucky fellow!" said Wynne; "could not you get off just to-night?"

"No," said Rex, "that I could not. May is in my mistress's eye, but it's a very watery May, I can tell you, if I forget my engagements, and don't come up to the scratch like a man at the right moment."

Rex went away on his unwelcome duty, and Wynne sauntered into the park, too much excited to do any thing but ponder over his altered fortunes, and the pleasant future that seemed to be opening upon him. He still found it difficult to believe. The hopes but lately so indistinct seemed now so close upon realization. The battle he was prepared to fight seemed already half won. Deep in thought, he wandered on into the least frequented paths, where scarcely a single passer-by disturbed the solitude of his reverie. Presently a form, unmistakable in its prettiness, caught his eye. It was Grace: she was alone, hurrying forward, and was close upon him before she perceived whom she

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was meeting. Both were a good deal embarrassed, but both, after the momentary awkwardness of being so suddenly confronted, seemed well pleased at the meeting. Grace had often dreaded the chance of such an encounter, but now that it was come she could not but enjoy it. She was glad that it was with Wynne rather than with any other of the party. She had always treated him with a sort of confidential familiarity, which the very remoteness of their characters seemed to sanction; and now, of all things, she longed for confidence and sympathy. On leaving the Rectory she had come to her English aunt, who was living in Kensington; and though the causes of her sudden arrival here had remained in convenient obscurity, the censoriousness of maiden ladies is proverbial, and Grace's residence had assumed more or less of a penitential character. Wynne, she knew, at any rate, would neither sermonize nor reproach; and besides, he could tell her news of the Leslies, of one of them especially about whom Grace felt insatiably inquisitive. He had a delicacy and rugged tenderness which made him an excellent listener to a sentimental story, and tempted Grace into being more and more communicative. She was extremely lonely; her aunt entirely uncongenial; the tedium of her present life all the worse for past enjoyment; Mrs. Leslie had treated her wickedly; Rachel was not allowed to write to her; her best friend cruelly taken away; altogether Grace drew a pathetic pic-

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ture, and looked so very dolorous and romantic that Wynne would have been an absolute monster if he had not been melted. Still waters run deep; and under a rough exterior lay so warm a heart, so prompt an interest, so ample a generosity, as seemed to ease her of half her burden as she told him her sorrow.

By this time they had reached one of the park gates. As they came out a carriage was entering. Wynne caught nothing but a glimpse of lace and flowers; one of its inmates, however, was sharper sighted, and next time Ella Bathurst wrote to Rachel she told her what she had observed.

"Was it not extraordinary?" she said. "I did not even know that Miss Featherstone had left you; perhaps the rest of the party were behind; but, as far as I could see, it was a *tête-à-tête*, and a rather tearful one too: her eyes looked very red. Do write, and tell me what you think."

Rachel's thoughts! could any one have seen them!

She tore up the letter, and went resolutely down stairs, where the children were waiting for her to organize some baby festival, and presided as queen of the revels in majestic cheerfulness, the cruel wound still inwardly bleeding from this fresh stab.

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CHAPTER XXII.

A NEW PROFESSOR.

AMONG the trim buildings that nestled round the Oldchurch Close, and seemed to have caught an old-fashioned and venerable air from so distinguished a vicinity, was a bookseller's and stationer's shop, which was devoted almost exclusively to Church matters, and greatly patronized by all the Cathedral authorities. It was here that the bishop got his charges printed, and the dean his lecture to the Oldchurch Institute. A chastened air of intellectual propriety was breathed around; the literature that adorned its shelves was mostly of a heavily decorous description. Here, ranged in solemn order, stood the Parker Society books—a perfect phalanx of learned orthodoxy. Here glittered an unfailing supply of *Lingerers* in blue and gold. Over the door hung a large print of the late bishop, still seeming to linger as presiding genius amid the scenes of his departed reign. Here it was naturally that the latest intelligence on any ecclesiastical affair was always to be had; and as Mrs. Baker, the little lady who administered its treasures, was a very chatty and agreeable sort of person, and had the in-

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terests of the Church near her heart, a great many of our clerical friends used often to drop in to buy a new pamphlet or a stick of sealing-wax and to hear the news. As the dean was one morning concluding his purchases, Mrs. Baker said, with an air of mingled modesty and triumph, "Here is a little thing we have been bringing out, sir — very much run after indeed; we flatter ourselves it is a remarkably good likeness;" and she forthwith produced a photograph of Atherton.

"Ah!" said the dean, screwing up his eyes, "very good indeed."

"Is it not, sir?" replied Mrs. Baker, who had herself got another in her hand, and was looking at it fondly with her head on one side. "Dear man! Do you see, sir, he has got his hand upon the *Lingerer*, and is supposed to be just describing the sunset on the Dead Sea?"

"Very touching indeed," said the dean.

"Do you see, sir, how it has just caught that sweet expression that comes over his face every now and then in his best sermons? Oh, he's a dear man indeed," continued Mrs. Baker, her enthusiasm getting too strong to content itself with interrogations; "and we so soon to lose him, too!"

"Lose him?" said the dean, all astonishment.

"Bless me," cried Mrs. Baker, "you don't mean to say you've not heard, sir; it's in this morning's *Patriot*, copied out of the *Globe* of last night;" and she handed over the paper, and pointed to a para-

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graph which ran as follows: "We are enabled to state upon good authority that the Regius Professorship of Religious Biography at the University of Oxford, recently vacated by the lamented demise of Dr. Hocuspocus, has been offered by the government to the Rev. Horatio Atherton, B.C.L., who has for some time past held the living of St. Cross-sticks at Oldchurch, and has been conspicuous among the most laborious and eloquent of the parochial clergy. Mr. Atherton's views are earnest but moderate, and his temper conciliatory. The appointment, we are sure, will be regarded with satisfaction both at the University and by the country at large."

The dean read it through without the slightest expression. "Might I ask you," he said, when he came to the end, "to put up one of the photographs for me? Five shillings, I think you said? Good-day, Mrs. Baker," and the dean carried off the future professor in his pocket, revolving mighty things in his breast.

The Professorship of Religious Biography was an uncommonly good thing. It gave a studious man a pleasant scope for reading, and a sufficiency of learned leisure. It gave an ambitious man a good opportunity of taking a prominent position. The last two professors preceding Dr. Hocuspocus had been made bishops. There was a *prestige* and dignity, and, at the same time, a practical utility about it, that the dean would have enjoyed of all things. He could not but grudge it to Atherton. Apart from

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any personal consideration, it was provoking to think of the rubbish he would talk, and the contempt into which he would bring an important office. Learning and religion seemed alike insulted by the promotion of an ignorant charlatan. All the prizes of life are depreciated when one is foolishly bestowed. Success itself seems scarcely worth winning when it has to be shared with blockheads and pretenders.

The dean walked along, gradually working himself into a passion. In the middle of the High Street he met the duchess, and, though quite disinclined to be sociable, he was too late to escape with politeness, and appeared at her carriage window with the utmost amiability depicted in every feature of his countenance.

"I am so pleased," she said, "about the new appointment. Mr. Atherton will be invaluable at Oxford."

"Dr. Hocuspocus was a sad loss," said the dean, with a subdued groan. "My fears are about Mr. Atherton's age. To handle other people's biographies successfully, a man ought first to have one of his own; whereas the new professor is a mere lad, and knows no more about religious history than one of your grace's footmen. However, all that will no doubt improve."

"Of course it will," said the duchess, who was in far too good spirits to be disconcerted by the dean's suggestions. "Mr. Pitt, you know, was prime minister at three-and-twenty."

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"Ah!" said the dean, as if suddenly convinced. "Well, I am sure Mr. Atherton has my heartiest good wishes."

"And mine," cried the duchess. "I took the greatest trouble about the matter, and so did the duke, and now we feel it quite a personal achievement. I never should have managed it, after all; but, from what you told me one evening at the Deanery, I was able to speak so much more confidently in urging Mr. Atherton on Lord Ascott as my particular favorite. Lord Ascott, you know, attaches so much importance to your opinion, and I told him how favorably you had spoken of Mr. Atherton's book, and how entirely you disapproved of the attacks of his critics. Lord Ascott, I found, had read them, and was violently prejudiced. I was so glad to be able to quote you. It was, of course, unanswerable."

"I am delighted to have contributed to any object which your grace had in view, I am sure," said the dean; "delighted." And yet, somehow or other, he did not quite look so.

"It was so fortunate," continued the duchess, confidentially, thinking that she would gratify the dean by showing how much he had had to do with procuring the appointment. "I was able to stop Lord Ascott at once by telling him what nonsense you thought the review, and how completely above such criticism you considered Mr. Atherton to be. And I took the trouble of getting a Shakspeare, and

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looking out that capital quotation of yours out of *Macbeth* about the falcon and the owl, which was so very *apropos:* it struck Lord Ascott amazingly, I assure you."

"No wonder," ejaculated the dean, nearly petrified by the duchess's revelations; "I congratulate your grace, and the Church, and University most sincerely."

"It certainly is most gratifying indeed," said the lady, as she drove off, leaving the dean in the middle of the street grinding his teeth in a phrensy of annoyance. If only Rachel could have seen the heavy penalty which her persecutor had now to pay for his evening's amusement at her expense!

No one, however, was destined to see it. The dean walked quietly home, locked himself into his study, and produced the photograph. There it lay before him, smirking, handsome, vapid—that sleek animal-like cheek! those great meaningless eyes! that complacent mouth, that carefully-disposed hair, fit only for a barber's block! The dean looked, and his black soul swelled within him; he took up a huge magnum bonum with which he generally ruled the Cathedral account-books, deliberately filled it with ink, and then—(I declare that nothing but the most imperative sense of historical obligation should induce me to divulge this)—he forthwith set to work on the unoffending portrait.

"You a regius professor!" he cried, drawing a large pair of donkey's ears in place of the human

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appendages which appeared in the photograph. "I should like to know what religious biography you can pretend to lecture about, except the half dozen old women you have frightened into spasms with your trumpery rhodomontade, and the foolish girls who fall in love with your nasty face!" The portrait, with the donkey's ears erect, still stared at him, blandly smiling, and more provokingly affable than ever.

It was too much for human endurance. The dean filled his pen.

"Dunce!" he said, stabbing his pen into the right eye; "idiot!"—(stab, stab.) "Ignoramus! Canting, twaddling, tuft-hunting! Imbecile, presumptuous"—(splutter, splutter).

The dean had accompanied each of these refreshing epithets with a stab, and at "presumptuous" his weapon had gone right through the cheek and pinned the unconscious victim to the desk, and there it stuck. The dean's apostrophe necessarily came to a pause; he had "unpacked his heart with words," and he felt much relieved by the process. His vexation was passed. It was excessively annoying to him, certainly, to have a man whom he felt to be so entirely his inferior passed up before him to the very post he would have liked himself, and then to be told that he had been the means of the elevation.

"The Church," he exclaimed, as he walked, fanning himself, up and down his study, "the Church

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will go to the dogs, I verily believe, if they go on making appointments in this way. It is downright suicidal. However, if the public like dunces, they pay for it, and they have a right to have what they like. Old Hocuspocus was perhaps not brilliant; still, he was, at any rate, decent. But Atherton! Well," he exclaimed, as he wrenched out the magnum bonum, and crunched up the bespattered picture, "well, it is an old story: *Populus vult decipi et decipiatur.*" The reader will agree with me that the dean had never spent five shillings to more advantage than in his morning's purchase.

He was not, however, going to be ill-tempered about it any more; why should he? Atherton was no worse than many others; and jealousy was not only wicked, but foolish. "I will go and congratulate him myself," thought the dean; and he was just about to execute this courteous design when there was a knock at the door, and a servant announced that the professor elect was in the drawing-room. The dean went instantly to his visitor.

"Accept my hearty congratulations," he cried, as Atherton, radiant and excited, rose to meet him: "I heard the news only an hour ago, and had a little matter to settle at home first, or I should have been with you before now."

Atherton was a good deal upset by his sudden influx of prosperity; a mind of no real stability, and carrying for ballast only the current opinions of men about himself, must needs find his whole

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equilibrium disturbed by any important change of outward circumstances, and the new professor had already begun to believe himself a much greater man than he had last night. His promotion seemed quite natural, the proper reward of his transcendent merits; the government, he felt, could not refuse to acknowledge his popularity; for, though the reviews reviled it, his book had had a great run, and his Church was always crowded. The dean would have been more likely than any one else to awe him into propriety; but even now, try as he would, he could not help giving himself airs and talking nonsense.

"I am sure," he said, as they talked over his destined office, "I have not truckled to the government or made play for the appointment. I have been outspoken enough. The duchess knows my opinion about the Hottentot Disabilities Bill; and only the last time I was at Bumblebee Hall I remember using these very words: 'Lord Buzzington,' I said, 'the sky is dark and the horizon is threatening;' and Lord Buzzington said he thought it was. I must do the government the justice to say that they can not have imagined they were buying a partisan."

"Call it conciliating an ally," said the dean, laughing; "it sounds better. But come, now, do not pledge yourself rashly. You will go with your party, of course. If they make you a bishop, you will have to put up with the Hottentots."

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"Never!" cried Atherton; "I am resolved as well as the government."

"Well," answered the dean, with an unperceived sneer, "I dare say you will some day see your way to getting over the difficulty. 'Avec cette sauce on mangerait son père;' and I dare say you will make shift to swallow a Hottentot, if you are allowed to do it in lawn sleeves."

"I do not," replied Atherton—"I never have professed to sympathize on all points with the government."

"Well," said the dean, "there are some of their proceedings which I am sure I deplore sincerely enough."

"Still," said the other, "though one does not entirely approve of the men, one may still be honest in generally supporting the policy; Providence often uses very base means to work out great ends."

The dean glanced up to see whether Atherton looked drunk or not; and, finding that he did not, concluded that his head was wandering.

"No one can view the ministry with a less partial eye than I do," continued Atherton, committing himself more and more as he warmed into his subject; "some members of it I positively protest against. Just look at Lord Atrocious's reputation: no one can deplore it more than myself, but that is not to prevent my looking at him as a prudential instrument for some good purpose."

"For your appointment, possibly," blandly sug-

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gested the dean; but Atherton was too far gone to be interrupted. "What is it we read?" he said: "not many wise, not many great ones are called; the fools of this world are sometimes chosen to confound the wise."

"Yes, they are," emphatically rejoined the dean, whose patience was at last fairly exhausted. "I advise you to preach on that for your first University sermon, and I dare say some good-natured reviewer will give a pleasant account of it in the next morning's *Chanticleer*. But there is the bell; let us go down and have some luncheon. We must take good care of you for the little time you will be left to us." And the dean opened the door, and waved Atherton out with such unutterable suavity and friendship that, though he had felt rather angry and frightened before, he speedily abandoned his suspicions, aud proceeded to do justice to the dean's hospitality with all the heartiness and good-will in the world.

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CHAPTER XXIII.

L'AMOUR EST MORT.

REX'S career throughout the spring had not, it must be confessed, been all that an anxious mother-in-law might have thought befitting the future protector of her daughter's felicity. He resented the half-pitying consideration with which his fast friends were prepared to treat him as a married man, and sometimes plunged all the deeper into enjoyments which even prospective bachelors were more wise to leave untasted. His heart told him he was just as much a rake as ever, and to be decent as yet was only to be gratuitously hypocritical. Tarefield met him one evening, burst out laughing, and said that he was glad to hear he meant to die game, and not repent before the moment of execution. Rex had no thought of repentance, and was in no hurry to be executed. Then Ella seemed in no way to deserve or to encourage any troublesome effort at amendment; in her way she was just as bad as he; he doubted whether she really loved and admired good even as much as he did. Her virtue was calculating, selfish, superficial; it was virtue, but of

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the most uninteresting order. Once, in a sentimental moment, for Rex was always either repenting or sinning, he had begun to be confidential about theology: Ella's commonplace reply speedily chilled him back to his ordinary reserve. Another time he had tried in vain to excite her sympathy for a noble cause, whose tragical failure had just then saddened men's hearts, and roused him into serious thoughtfulness: Ella put it aside, smiling indifferently, and Rex that night was the noisiest sharer in a bad revel. The destined husband of such a woman need not be particular—had better not be particular. Somehow the future that lay before him seemed strangely impossible; detail after detail was discussed and settled, and yet he could realize it less than ever. Something or other, he did not much care what, would come—so a not unwelcome presentiment told him—to stand between him and the career which seemed already his. His mood was rather desperate, and it showed itself in every action of his life. He played at his club as if money had ceased to have any appreciable importance. His friends declared that he had always a handful of loose sovereigns to stake about or upon any thing that his own or any body else's caprice happened to suggest. His betting-book, too, gradually began to wear a look that frightened even himself when he calculated what must happen in every case but one. His great, his only hope depended upon Tartarus's success; and as this seemed suffi-

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ciently probable, he cheerfully accepted the exciting necessity of putting all his fortunes upon a single hazard. Wynne knew that he was going wrong, and preached with the usual success of unwelcome advisers. Rex, however, was so far persuaded as to come and live with his monitor at the Temple, and so be half way to his work in the morning, and always within reach of a sermon. The accounts which he gave of the intended movements of his family were by no means so ample or satisfactory as Wynne would have wished. They were still at Westborough. Rex was looking for a house for them in London, but weeks went by and still they lingered. Rex said that his mother had not been very strong of late, and that the winter at the sea-side had answered so thoroughly that she dreaded and delayed the change. But he expected them before long. Wynne's patience was sorely tried; at last, however, one evening, in the midst of a discussion about the approaching Derby, Rex casually announced that his relations had arrived. Wynne said he should hope to see them before long: "When should he be likely to find them at home?"

"Come with me to-night to Lady Trumpeton's," said Rex, "and we shall find them there. It is only a juvenile dance, so you must not expect to find any partners over twelve, and I do not suppose you would care whether they are twelve or twelve hundred."

Wynne professed himself philosophically indiffer-

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ent in the matter of age, and quite prepared for the expedition. An hour later the two men were making the best of their way up Lady Trumpeton's crowded staircase. As they entered the room Rachel was standing in the centre of a group of children, grand mistress of the games. One little creature, who had got wrong in the crowd, and had lost its place, clung to her hand with the quick instinct of weakness in discerning a good protector. Her face was radiant; Wynne heard her clear laugh amid the Babel of baby voices. She turned pale as he caught her eye in the distance, and tried to seem unconscious of his presence, but she could scarcely conceal her agitation. It seemed a crowning wrong that he should have the hardihood again to meet her. All through the winter the dreadful suspicion had been ever present, weighing down her spirits; Ella's letter had given it a horrible certainty. The sense of injury, brooded over in solitude, had deepened and intensified. All the while the liking, friendship, love must she call it? that she scorned to acknowledge to herself, clung fast to her recollection. She struggled against it in vain. It seemed a disgraceful thing even to think of it. She resolved to cleanse her memory of it as of some dark stain. It was cruel, it was unmanly, that he could bear to inflict upon her any farther annoyance; it was too bad if she was to be haunted by his presence when her one wish was to forget him.

She turned away from the direction in which he

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was moving, but she felt a dreadful consciousness that he was approaching her. In another moment he stood at her side. Rachel's heart beat terribly, and her strength seemed to be leaving her as he began to speak. She made him a cold bow and passed away. Wynne stood still, absolutely transfixed with wonder and disappointment. Imagination had often enough ere now described every detail of the interview, but never in such colors as these. Late on in the evening he found her sitting alone, and determined to know the worst of his fate.

"Friendships soon die, Miss Leslie."

"People kill them," said Rachel.

"The worst of murders."

"The very worst," she answered, stubbornly.

Then came a pause, and then Wynne's pent-up storm burst. "I am doomed to be unfortunate," he said, bitterly. "I ought not to have forgotten it. Nothing has ever gone right with me, and now it is the same. You first made me think life worth having. Your kindness was the keenest pleasure I ever tasted. I have lived ever since in remembering you. You have filled all my hopes. Hopes! God knows how I have hoped, and longed, and waited patiently; and for what? Why, to come here to have you kill me with angry looks and bitter words like these. I can not understand it. I can hardly believe it."

No answer but an impatient gesture. "What

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has happened since we met at Westborough?" he continued.

"Westborough!" said Rachel; "how can you talk to me of it? How did it all end? in something like disgrace and shame; in all our pleasant life being broken up; in my losing my dearest friend, and her prospects being marred and her fame tarnished, and, I dare say, her heart broken."

"Good God! Miss Leslie, you surely do not suppose—"

"No, I do not," said Rachel, quickly. "Pray spare me explanations. But it is sufficiently humiliating. You sinned against no written law, but you broke all honor and truth. You tried to win the hearts of two people at once, and you were a traitor to both, and then you ask me to forgive it. Why, I could not forgive it in my own brother. Can you fancy his doing it? I can not. It would break my heart to think that any one I cared for could be half so base."

Wynne stopped in embarrassment. Should he clear himself at the expense of Rex's character, when his character was worth so much? At any rate, would it not be better for Rex himself to do it?

The doubt kept him silent for a moment. Rachel interpreted his hesitation for the worst. She was mad with indignation.

"Have you seen her since you met in the Park—do you bring me no message from her?" she asked, in cruel, desperate tones.

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This was too much for Wynne's patience. "I have not seen her since we met in the Park, and I bring you no message, Miss Leslie; and I wish you good-night."

Rachel was left mistress of the field.

If Wynne had doubted about telling the truth before, he was decided now. Charity made it difficult; pride made it impossible. Rachel had been excessively wrong. She had been suspicious, untrusting, ungenerous. Wynne had every right to feel himself aggrieved. Infirmity, however, is not invariably altogether displeasing, and Rachel's indiscretion had, at any rate, worn an imposing shape. How noble her anger looked! how her passion hurried her along! What eloquence in her unjust accusation! What a vehement, fiery nature! What flashing eyes! What a beautiful attitude!

Wynne felt that he had never been really in love till to-night.

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CHAPTER XXIV.

FORTUNE'S SMILES AND FROWNS.

NEVER had a Derby-day been more anxiously expected than the one which was now approaching. The sporting world was in a tumult, and all London was infected with the prevailing excitement. Tartarus had more than realized his friends' expectations. His spring performances had been admirable, and he and another horse, South African, stood out as the two undeniable favorites for the coming race. About these opinions were divided. The backers of either were certain that they had made their fortunes, and gave any odds you liked to ask against the rest of the field. "Monitor," the possession of whose tips (only half a crown), as advertised in *Bell's Life*, were to a young man of spirit and discretion only another form of so many thousands in the Three per Cents.; "Hic et ubique," who had named five winners the last season; "Nestor," who had felt the legs and watched the gallop of every horse in the calendar—all these and a host of other prophets, though of course expressing themselves with a certain oracular indistinctness appropriate to the occasion, yet seemed to agree in thinking that the struggle lay between these two, and

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that the field would be nowhere. It was a bright time for the fortunate people who had had the earliest intelligence of the turn which matters were to take, and had used their knowledge courageously. For once Rex seemed to have come in for a lucky stroke. What despairing faces the poor fellows wore who had given long odds early in the year, and could not now get them off at any price! How poor Ensign Wiffles wished to goodness he had not given Leslie 20 to 1 against Tartarus the last October in £10 notes! Far into the night that despairing youth sat smoking gloomily at his club, and listening, with feverish anxiety, for any fresh rumor that the evening might bring. But no, it brought no change; and at last Wiffles, after striving in vain to banish care with deep potations, sought his melancholy couch, and dreamed that Tartarus, with 20 to 1 branded all over him, was winning Derbies all night across the counterpane which covered his restless limbs. Rex, too, went to bed in very different spirits. He came home boisterous and mirthful to chambers, and found Wynne still at work over his papers, and not at all disposed to submit patiently to interruption. Rex broke noisily into the room, and tossed himself into the first arm-chair that came to hand.

"First, something cool to drink," he cried; "next, a weed, please; then tell me what you are writing about, and I'll help you. I feel quite prepared to be wise about any subject you please."

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"How very drunk you look," said Wynne. "Come out into the court and let me pump on your head, and then you shall go to bed quietly, and be fresh for to-morrow."

"Ah!" said Leslie, "it will be Westminster Abbey or a peerage for me to-morrow, I can tell you; and if any thing were to go wrong with Tartarus, it will be Westminster Abbey and no mistake. I have been a fool, Wynne. I am afraid to think of it. I won't think of it. They say we are all right. By Jove, I hope we are. Just look here." And Rex pulled out his book and disclosed a formidable array of bets on the next day's event.

He had never been so confidential before, and Wynne's face grew darker and darker as he turned over page after page of the offending volume, and found what a fearful hazard his friend was running.

"Well, you *are* a fool, Rex. Why, you have been betting about it just as if it were a certainty."

"To be sure," cried Leslie. "Aut cita mors aut victoria læta. If I win I shall pay my debts, start fair, and never bet any more. If I lose—well, you see, I don't mean to lose—anyhow, it is too late to preach or to repent. So good night, old fellow.

> He either fears his fate too much,
> Or his desert is small,
> Who dares not put it to the touch,
> And win or lose it all.

And as my desert is not small, and as I do not fear

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my fate a bit, I like the venture. At the worst, it is only going to the dogs rather faster than usual, and beggary would, at any rate, be a new sensation."

"Come, come," said Wynne, "you are not so *blasé* as all that."

"No," said Rex. "I mean to win, of course, and you must come down with me and see the race."

Rex lit a candle and went away singing to his bedroom; and Wynne, anxious and excited by the news he had just learned, worked on far into the night, endeavoring in vain to shake off the presentiment of an approaching catastrophe.

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Nine o'clock, and the morning of the Derby! You see at once there is something astir. There is a look about the people in the streets that tells you it is a holiday. Jones and Smith, who all the year round go to their desks in the city as regular as clockwork, this day, fortunate youths, bend their courses to the Surrey hills. Brown packs Mrs. Brown, and Mrs. Brown's sister and two apprentices, into a tax-cart, forgets the fall of sugar and the rise of the opposition shop over the way, and resolves to have a day of it. Jenkins and Tomkins, the luxurious rogues, like being comfortable, and are going down in a Hansom cab, with a green curtain to protect their delicate complexions. What a curveting of gray posters in front of Messrs. Gobble and Munchet's in Piccadilly, while raised pies and baskets of Champagne are being laid in for the

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afternoon's consumption! What a starting off of inviting-looking drags, their roofs covered with jocund guardsmen, the grooms stowed away with the food inside, ready to emerge at a moment's notice when any thing goes wrong, as you may be quite sure something will when they come down the hill from the course after the race! What a talkative, laughing crowd of military gentlemen outside the "Tag and Bobtail," comparing notes, and betting and hedging, and enjoying themselves immensely! Presently Rex makes his appearance, all hilarity.

"Take the odds against Tartarus, Rex, my boy," cries some one as he comes up.

"All right," said Reginald, putting it down. "In fifties?"

"Fifties be it," says his companion. "Do you want a light?"

"Thank you," said Rex. "By the way, I've not had any breakfast yet."

"Come here!" shouts a voice inside; and Reginald passes in, betting freely with whomsoever he meets, among the rest noting down some heavy sums against several outsiders, one of whom, especially some insane fellows, were obstinately resolute to stand by through thick and thin. However, if they chose to throw away their money, that was no affair of Reginald's, and did not the least interfere with his complete enjoyment of as hearty a breakfast as was devoured that morning in all London.

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We are on Epsom Heath. It is a quarter to three, and all the pent-up excitement of the day has reached its climax. What a clatter goes up from the great crowd into the clear summer sky. A hundred thousand people it seems, and all talking as fast as tongue can go. How the ring shout, and gesticulate, and grow quite frantic in their eagerness. Every moment the tension of nerve becomes greater. The mob presses close to the barriers. Nowhere could you screw in a single other body. The stands are a dense black mass. Every where wild excitement, every where eager eyes, hot brains; every where a mad babel of phrensy-driven tongues! The bell rings; the horses flash by, one by one, for their gallop. Here comes Tartarus, as much as his jockey can do to hold him, as he tosses his head about and bounds along with a wild spring, with great flakes of foam on his glossy coat.

"Isn't he a splendid fellow?" cries Rex to his companion, as they ensconce themselves on the top of the drag, and get ready their glasses to watch the proceedings.

"What a stride! He looks magnificent, certainly."

And so he did—a winner every inch of him.

Louder—louder rages the roar of tongues. Another bell, and now they're off! No—a false start! No—no—there they go, that little patch of varied colors; what destinies hang upon it! A thousand wild hopes, dreadful disappointments, blighted lives,

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broken hearts! And now they're round the corner. The confused group grows large and distinct. Each horse and man becomes gradually perceptible. Here they come—nearer—nearer! What a maddening sound the thud of their hoofs is on the turf. The wild crash of vociferation thunders louder than ever. Another instant, and they sweep past like an angry whirlwind; and Rex, with a deep low oath, jumps down from the drag, drinks off a tumbler of Champagne, wipes the great cold beads that cover his forehead, and walks away to the Grand Stand—a ruined man! * * * *

Just as he came up by the Marble Arch, Ella was coming out of the Park. Rex saw her, beckoned to the coachman to stop, and got into the carriage.

"Why, Rex, what in the world is the matter?"

He looked so wild and haggard, it must be confessed that Ella might well be in consternation.

"I was on my way to you," he answered, "to tell you. My usual luck's the matter, Ella; I have lost a good deal of money this morning."

Ella's face darkened. "How is that?" she asked; "didn't you promise papa you never would play any more, or bet, or any thing of that sort? Did not I beg and entreat you not to—"

"Oh, for goodness sake, don't lecture me now, Ella. I came because there's no one else in all London that I thought would be sorry for me, and, goodness knows, I want a little consolation."

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But Ella had none to give him—only a tempestuous flood of angry tears.

"It serves you right, Reginald; you broke your word to do it. You are so provokingly foolish, too; you know you always lose."

"Yes," said Rex, "I know; I'm the unluckiest fellow in all London, and the most miserable."

"How much is it?" said Ella, who always had a keen eye to business; "is it a great deal?"

"Yes," he said, "a ruinous deal—a very great deal more than I can ever pay; in short—in short, I came to wish you good-by, dear, because I'm afraid I shall have to go abroad."

Ella looked at him in angry amazement; not a spark of pity or love remained. When they got home he followed her into the drawing-room.

"So," she said, "this is the end—you have ruined yourself when you were no longer your own to ruin. You have not minded the sorrow I should have, and the disgrace. I thought you did not care about me, Reginald; I have for a long while; you never loved me much, and it has grown less and less. You have not behaved as you should to me, ever. I loved you with all my heart, and you didn't care about me, and laughed at me with Rachel for being so stupid. And this season you've almost deserted me; other people are far kinder and politer, and more thoughtful. And what a position to put me in now—to have my match broken off because you're ruined at betting; what will people think of me?"

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"Don't be cruel, Ella; God knows I feel it keenly enough. Don't press too hard on me; I've learned a lesson."

"You have learned it too late," said Ella, through her passionate tears, "and I have learned mine just in time. I don't believe your repentance—I don't believe in your promises—I don't trust, I don't love you."

"To turn against me now," said Rex, "when I'm down and crushed—it's unwomanly. Dearest love, forgive me once more."

"Never!" said Ella; "I can not."

"Never!" said Rex, suddenly taking up his hat; "then good-by, and the next man you jilt choose a kinder moment for it than you have for me."

As he went out at the door Captain Tarefield met him on the steps. He looked rather awkward, and stammered out something about the race. Rex gave him a meaning look, and patted him on the shoulder.

"Le roi est mort," he said; "vive le roi."

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A night's reflection rendered the aspect of Leslie's circumstances none the more cheerful. The more he looked, the less he liked it. The excitement of the catastrophe was over, and it began to weigh like lead upon him. He had plenty of time for reflection, for he could go to none of his old haunts. He could not well show himself at the club, for all his friends knew of his loss, and, what

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was still more inconvenient, so did his creditors. He had seen Wynne once, and borrowed some money of him, to be paid probably, as he told him, at the Greek kalends; but he did not choose to go to him again, because he could scarcely help telling him his plans, and then they might reach his family, and so get stopped. He hoped he might be well out of England before they heard of his misfortune. It would be terrible to encounter his mother's stern upbraiding, her bitter disappointment, Rachel's silent reproach; he would write from on board ship and tell them, not before he had taken some definite practical step toward righting his fallen fortunes. His plans, however, could not be settled at once, and meanwhile time hung terribly heavy on his hands. His rage with Ella, too, died down, and left him full of regrets. She had vexed him often, and at last proved signally the shallow selfishness of her nature, but still he could not help feeling tender about her. The old fondness crept over him again in his solitude. After all, and in spite of all, he had been her lover. He steeled his heart against her, and yet it grieved him. How could she bear to desert him just then, to throw him over so remorselessly, just when Fortune turned her back and all the world was wrong with him! That "never" rang in his ears disagreeably. The last woman's words he was to take with him on his wanderings. It was cruel.

Poor Rex put his head down on the table, and had a good cry over his troubles.

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Meanwhile summer was waning into autumn, and into more than autumnal heat. There had been no rain for weeks; the days were close and stifling; night seemed to bring no relief; the hot, dry air hung like an immovable curtain over the doomed city. Morning after morning the sun rose in a cloudless sky, and blazed through the long day, beating down pitilessly on the thirsting, suffering crowd. Men looked pale and feeble, and moved about quietly, making for a little shade. Day after day the great river flowed backward and forward with its deadly load, seething and steaming in the intense heat, so that those who stood on its banks turned away sick and faint at its poisonous exhalations. And then came news of laborers at work in the fields suddenly seized and going raging mad from the torment of heat, or of travelers falling sunstruck on some shadeless high road; and next, a rumor of strange deaths in some low suburbs, which soon grew into an alarm, and the alarm presently, as the list of victims daily increased, into a terrible certainty; and then, at last, men confessed to themselves, what they had been striving so hard to disbelieve, that death stood at the door and knocked; that the destroying angel had drawn his sword to smite, and that the curse of a great epidemic had fallen upon them.

It was at this time that a messenger came one evening to Wynne's chambers; he had been sent, he said, to find Mr. Leslie or Mr. Wynne, and to ask

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one of them to come and see a Westborough sailor, called Cook, down at the docks, who was very ill, and seemed dying. His companions were gone home, and there was no one in London belonging to him. Would Mr. Wynne come?

In half an hour Wynne found himself at the house of which the messenger had told him. As he entered the sick man turned his head feebly toward him, his gaunt face lighting up with a smile that made its emaciation look even more ghastly than before. It was Ned Cook. His great horny hand lay white and powerless on the coverlet, exhaustion in its every line. The huge bones stood out, and the knots of muscle, and the old marks of rough work; it was massive strong, and yet one saw in a moment that he could barely move it.

His sleeve was open; Wynne remembered the anchor tattooed on his arm, and thought of the many good sails they had had together.

It was a pitiful thing to see; it was worse when he spoke. His voice was hollow and broken; each word seemed to cost him an effort.

"I thought you'd come, Mr. Wynne," he said; "I've been very bad—very near dead. How is Mr. Reginald?"

By degrees his story came out.

"You remember the *Mary Anne* schooner, her that lay so long in the harbor after the storm down at Westborough last summer; they had not hands enough, and I and two others came along with them

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to bring her up to London; I did not like the job from the first, and when we got into the river the air seemed downright like hot poison, and the next day I was seized with the disease, and that's a week yesterday; and last night I lay awake, and was thinking I might not get back to Westborough, and then I remembered you down there, and Mr. Reginald, and Miss Rachel, and so I made bold to send to you."

"I should think so," said Wynne; "why didn't you send before?"

"I kept thinking each day I should be better, and this is a poor place to ask you to; but my mates had gone back, and I was lonely, and got thinking about my wife, and how she'd take it, poor thing, if the worst happened, and that's an awkward sort of thing, sir, to be all alone and think about."

Poor Cook's eyes were brimming, half with sentiment, half from sheer weakness; excessive exhaustion apparently had well-nigh done its work.

"Come, come," said Wynne, "you must keep up your heart. You'll be all right in a few days, and back to Westborough in time for the herrings, you'll see. Do you want to drink?"

He held the cup to Cook's lips, the sick man's grateful eye watching him as he drank.

And so Wynne was forthwith installed as chief friend in that sick-room, and each day went down to the docks to see how the other got on.

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There is no knowing what one can do till one tries; Wynne was taken by surprise to find himself growing into a capital nurse. The skill with which he mixed cooling drinks, and arranged pillows, and invented new ways for easing the invalid's aching limbs, constantly excited Cook's unbounded admiration.

"To be sure, Mr. Wynne, you do it like any woman," was the climax of compliment with which he one day honored some arrangement which the other had devised.

As he got stronger they had long chats together; Cook grew very communicative, and gradually let out what evidently was most present to his thoughts. He had at first insisted on his illness being kept a secret from his wife; but, when the danger diminished, Wynne was promoted to the confidential position of amanuensis, and not a few tender epistles were forthwith dictated and dispatched from the unlettered Ulysses to the absent and anxious Penelope. Cook's education, except in sea matters, had been of a very fragmentary description, and his views as to grammar were entirely unconventional, but the matter was far too good for any one to find fault with the medium in which it was conveyed. Good wives, too, are but indifferent critics; and the letters were no doubt devoured with quite as much eagerness and delight as though a Chesterfield had rounded their periods into elegance, or a Walpole crammed them with the most fashionable scandal

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and the neatest *bons mots*. The necessities of the case induced an intimacy and unreserve which weakness finds so congenial a relief, and Cook by degrees got over his modesty sufficiently to allow of his sounding the praises of his household to his new companion: how his wife had been the prettiest girl in Westborough, and was, by universal consent, the best of wives and mothers; how his little girl had been publicly patted on the head by the archdeacon in approval of her virtues, and could say hymns and poems in a manner that fairly passed her father's comprehension; how his eldest boy, scarcely yet breeched, always insisted on going to sea with the men, and showed so much pluck in rough weather as to make him the general pet of all the crews, and a model for a whole generation of fishing-lads—all this, and a great many other domestic details, were duly recounted with all the sincerity of connubial and paternal admiration, and listened to with a great deal more interest than the hearer himself would have beforehand conceived possible.

"That night," said Cook, "before you came to see me, I could not sleep for thinking how it would be for them if I never got back. If I died, sir, I should not like her to hear of it chance-wise. You would write and tell her, wouldn't you?"

"Of course I would," said Wynne. "But you must not talk like that: why, I think you are getting well as fast as a man need wish. In another

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week or so you'll be going back yourself to show them you are all right. Why, you look twice the man you did the other day."

"You do me good, Mr. Wynne. I can talk to you, you see, and my thoughts don't weigh on my mind so." A few days later Wynne found the sick man sitting up.

"Try if you can't walk," he said.

Wynne held his arm and helped the tottering giant across the room. It was not far, certainly, but the undertaking occupied some time, and interested both of them a great deal; and when they got to the window, though the chimney-stacks were plentiful and the horizon was somewhat confined, still there was the clear sky, with here and there a pigeon whirling in it, and a kite fluttering up from some neighboring court, and voices of men and women, and shouts of children; and poor Cook leaned his head out and drank it all in in an ecstasy of satisfaction.

"I believe you're right, Mr. Wynne; I shall go back to them myself."

And so he did: a few days later Wynne appeared at his lodging with a strange parcel, of which he seemed half ashamed.

"Look here," he said; "you're to blow this up with air, and it will make you a good soft seat, and keep your back from aching on the journey down."

And so, fortified with his air-cushion, Cook at last set off for his home, and Wynne went back to

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his, somehow missing his companion terribly, and feeling his chambers a more lonely abode than ever. It troubled him to hear no news of Reginald. Whatever his next step might be, it would probably do something to clear away the mistake under which his sister had so long been laboring, and which Wynne could scarcely bear either to leave unexplained, or to remove at the cost of such suffering as its discovery must involve. To have told Rex before would of course have been equivalent to telling her, as common honor must have compelled him to an immediate acknowledgment of the offense which was attributed to his friend. Wynne had hesitated to do it, and yet the strictest chivalry could not require that the truth should be permanently concealed; it was Rachel's right as much as his own that her misjudgment should be corrected, and that at once. There was some comfort, then, in matters having taken a turn which, however otherwise unfortunate, yet gave a likelihood of a speedy discovery for which Wynne should be in no wise responsible. He resolved at last to write and tell Robert to come to him. Something seemed to weigh down his spirits, paralyze his strength, and weaken his nerve. His mind was confused, and a sort of dreaminess took possession of him; not the pleasant, easy dreaminess of idle health, but restless, awful, bewildering. On the morrow he scarcely cared to move all day, lay languidly on his sofa, and wondered what could make him so lazy.

The third day he knew only too well.

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CHAPTER XXV.

THE OLD LOVE.

REX resolved upon one farewell visit at least before he left England. Now that his engagement was at an end, his promise to his mother not to visit Grace seemed no longer binding. He longed for a friend, and she was just the most congenial friend for his present mood. It would never occur to her, he knew, to question the propriety or the wisdom of the proceedings that had just come to so tragical an end; she would look upon his loss as simply a misfortune, and her sympathy would be unalloyed by any element of reproof. She was quite incapable of giving good advice, or taking any other than a sentimental view of her neighbors' affairs. It was a relief to be safe from a lecture, for Rex felt strongly enough that his present plight offered an occasion for pointing a moral as to rashness and extravagance which no moralist would be self-denying enough to forego.

As he thought of seeing her once more, his eagerness for the visit became strangely vehement. At first it was a whim—it soon grew to a passion. It seemed the one bright thing within his reach, and

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he caught at it almost with desperation. There was an intimacy between them undefinable, unaccountable, but which, in his present solitude, seemed to promise the most exquisite satisfaction. In some ways he could be far more familiar with her than with Ella, or even with Rachel. The fibre of her character so exactly fitted his. He could tell her his troubles with more unreserve. His sister's nature was too high, too fastidiously conscientious, too inflexibly good for Rex to be always certain of her sympathy. Her common sense was too strong not to rebel at his follies. Her taste was too delicate to hold fellowship with any approach to crime. She seemed unconscious of the temptations which were forever swaying his life this way or that. A compromise with wrong, the slightest deflection from known duty, would never present itself to her as a possibility. Rex admired her goodness, and yet he dreaded it. It was like a distant snow summit, where no footstep has ever sullied the glittering surface—spotless, unapproachable, and icy cold. Often he had been startled to see how a thoughtless word, a rash confession, had seemed to shock her. Grace was a far fitter confidante for a story like that which he had now to tell. He felt essentially unheroic, rather provoked at his luck than repentant for his weakness; and, though he chose to believe himself ill used, very much the lighter-hearted for the newly-acquired freedom which his dismissal had brought him. He felt half ashamed of the ex-

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citement and high spirits in which he set off on his expedition. Grace did not disappoint his hopes. His arrival took her off her guard, but surprise never threw itself into a prettier attitude. Her manner was constrained, but it was the most becoming embarrassment. She blushed as he spoke of Rachel, and a great wave of tears gathered from their neighboring fount, and hung trembling above her long, soft eyelashes, as they went back to the scenes of the departed summer. She smiled the most sentimental of lachrymose smiles, and Rex was in no such iron mood as to resist the pathos of so touching a spectacle. One's grandsire cut in alabaster could scarcely have looked on unmoved; impetuous youth, hot flesh and blood, naturally succumbed at once.

"I am come," he said, "to confess and be absolved. I am going half way round the world, and want to have your forgiveness to take with me to Australia."

"Australia!" cried Grace, opening her eyes in astonishment. "What has happened?"

"The wicked fairy who takes care of me," said Rex, "has played me another cruel trick;" and then he told her about the Derby, and Grace dashed her delicate little hand down with an impatient gesture when she heard how Tartarus had suddenly failed in the few last strides of the race, and how Rex had been within half a neck of making his fortune.

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"I should have died with disappointment," she said; and Rex quite loved her for taking that view only of the catastrophe. "And so you must go to Australia? I am so sorry for you."

"It does not sound very amusing, does it? But I shall be glad to be off; it's too lonely here. Except Wynne, I have not seen a friend since it happened."

"No?" said Grace, pretending to herself that she was not longing to know what part Ella Bathurst had taken in the proceeding.

"False friends leave us in bad times, you know, and nothing, perhaps, is a misfortune that helps us to be rid of them."

Grace knew what he meant, and the hope she had been so long striving to extinguish burned as high as ever. Through what troubles could not she have loved him! what dark times but would be bright in his company! How doubly worthy of love now that he was in trouble. Ella had never deserved him. What right had Mrs. Leslie to sacrifice her for such a worthless rival? How cruel to try to crush out a true love. How well that the cruelty should have proved not even expedient.

Rex perhaps traced something of her thoughts in her brightening eye and excited air. The conversation, at any rate, took a confidential turn; a more indulgent sprite than once before watched over the interview, and guarded it from unwelcome intrusion or inappropriate listeners. It came smoothly

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and safely to a close. That evening Grace surprised her aunt by her unusual cheerfulness, and Rex went to bed with the conviction that a sudden insolvency was not, after all, in some cases, without its elements of consolation.

Meanwhile the equanimity of his relations was far less easily restored. He had determined, and the well-trained selfishness of his character made it an easy task, to banish them from his thoughts. If cheerfulness were his object, it was quite as well that he should do so. They had heard of his trouble only by rumor. Wynne had written, in answer to a letter of Mrs. Leslie's, to tell her all he knew. Ella had confirmed the story to Rachel. Beyond the fact of his ruin, they could learn nothing. The uncertainty and suspense, the acknowledged disgrace, the shameful notoriety, the cruel overthrow of every hope about her brother, seemed a burden almost insupportable to Rachel's spirit, already so grievously wounded. Her interview with Wynne had stirred the very depths of her nature, and the recollection of it threw her constantly into a fever of excitement. And now one calamity had followed upon another. Every thing seemed to be proved and found wanting. Was there, she thought, any real good in life? First, the illusion of a pure and ennobling love destroyed, the cup of perfect friendship dashed from her lips, and now a brother miserably and shamefully lost. Why was one born to be the mockery of so many failures, to be tanta-

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lized a while with such phantoms of enjoyment, and then left in all the keener suffering of discovery and despair? Was this the existence that people said was, after all, a happy one? was heaven itself merciful, in whose schemes such miseries as these could find a place? Intense agitation, acting unceasingly upon a vehement nature, before long wrought out its natural result. Excitement passed into a morbid nervousness. Her senses, Rachel felt more and more, were no longer faithful interpreters from the outer world. Memory and feeling seemed hopelessly confused. Voices that she knew existed only in recollection sounded in her ears as distinctly as if actually spoken. The clear outline of the real and unreal seemed faint and confused. She was much alone, and regret peopled her solitude with images too vivid for dream-land. The spectral world, generally so far away, grew close about her, and seemed to cast its deep shadow over her being. Rachel had not strength to resist, scarcely to regret, as the deep current of feeling hurried her irresistibly along. Whither was it to bear her? To this, at length—that as the last twilight of a long, weary summer day was dying out, the form of him from whom she had parted so angrily, whom she strove to fancy she had banished so completely, entered, or seemed to enter, silently at her door, sat once more by her side, the same, and yet not the same —the same in purity, goodness, honor; for all the miserable after story seemed suddenly canceled, all

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that was base or untruthful never could have been. The stain that had blackened his good faith had died away, and left him more than ever worthy of devotion, the only rightful claimant of her heart's worship; and yet not the same, because—a horror fell upon Rachel as the reason flashed into her mind—was it, could it be, that she was looking upon him now for the last time? Of what new crisis in her fate might not this unsubstantial messenger bear the tidings? The truth, at any rate, should now, at least—now perhaps once for all, be fully spoken. "Yes," she said, and it was relief to tell it even to the creature of her own imagination, "yes, God knows it—I loved you—I do love you with all my heart."

* * * * * * *

At last suspense was ended.

A letter came from Reginald to his mother. He was improved by his troubles, as it seemed; its language was affectionate and manly, full of courage and good resolutions. It was dated from on board ship; they were on their way to Sydney.

"Who are 'they?'" Rachel asked, as she read it over Mrs. Leslie's shoulder.

Every body, Rex said, had been wonderfully kind; several men had written, like good fellows, as they were, and told him not to mind about the bets—they considered them off; and one of them, the son of an Australian merchant, had got him an employment for his father's house out there, in

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which he was sure he could do well, and which would bring him enough to live on for the present, and increase by degrees. Wynne, always true, had lent him the money for his outfit. Then came the part of the letter which he evidently shrunk from, and staved off while he could.

"You wonder," it said, "why I speak of 'we:' it is my wife, dear mother. I could not leave her behind. We were married the day before I sailed. I kept my promise to you, and never saw her till after my trouble. But I got to love her more for struggling against it. I never could have stood by the old plan, or have been any thing but wicked and unhappy with any one else. I have my best, my only true companion in my darling Grace."

"Grace!" said Rachel, turning pale, and moving suddenly away to the sofa; "Grace!" She could read no more, and sat still, as if paralyzed by the word, looking at her mother as she read on, and still muttering to herself, as if she could not scarcely realize it, "Grace!"

A note, too, had come for Robert from Wynne; it had been sent to Oxford, and had waited there some days before it was sent on to them in London. It sounded rather low. He felt dull alone in chambers, and was very poorly, and could not get about, the weather so oppressively hot. Would Robert come and see him, and have a talk about Rex's affairs?

"Would I not?" cried Robert. "Let us make

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him come to us here. I have not seen him for an age. I don't suppose he will come, though."

"Shall I write and invite him?" said Rachel.

"You?" said Robert, surprised; "yes, do. Write your commands, and I will be your messenger, and bring him back in the afternoon."

Rachel went off hurriedly to her room, and presently sent the note down by a messenger. She could not trust herself in public again. Her excitement was almost too much to bear. If she had followed her natural impulse, she would have liked to rush off and throw herself at Wynne's feet, and earn forgiveness by the intensity of repentance; but to sit still and wait—thank God, not for long, but still it was torture. Robert was to be back at five, and meanwhile how to spend it? how to endure those mad hours of anxiety that plunged, and tossed, and hurried her along on their wild current? How, indeed?

Robert, however, came back before five; Rachel heard his step outside; her breath seemed almost to stop; every beat of her heart shook her whole frame; each moment that brought him to her presence was an eternity of expectation.

Robert, however, came into the room alone, nervous and grave, with the air of one who has suffered some terrible shock. He had Rachel's letter in his hand, and walked silently up to her and gave it back. Then he sat down, covered his face with his hands, and burst out crying. She longed to ask,

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but dared not speak. At last Robert, as best he could, told her his heavy tidings.

Rachel rushed up stairs. The children were playing in the hall as she swept unheeding past them.

"Did you see how white Rachel looked?" one of them asked; "like marble; what is the matter, I wonder?"

No one but Rachel ever knew quite all that was the matter; but every one presently learned Robert's bad news; how he had come to the old chambers, and met strange faces on the stairs, and felt a general air of stillness all about the place, and found the door he had so often knocked at in old times closed fast, and opened at last by an unfamiliar hand; and then, a darkened room—a mysterious hush—a strange absence of all the disorderly symptoms of habitation; and on the bed a long, stiff form—a cold, white, dead form, and that form Wynne's.

Robert was the only person to whom Rachel ever mentioned it. His sentiment was delicate, and made him intuitively sagacious as to another's feelings. He guessed enough of his sister's sorrow to make his confidence welcome. He talked to her of their lost friend so gently and so fondly, that Rachel came by degrees to trust him with more of her heart, and to rest more on his sympathy.

"Do you remember," he once said to her afterward, "that evening last summer when we were talking about the fisherman who was drowned, and he quoted *Je mourrai seul?* we little thought it was a prophecy."

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"Ah!" said Rachel, in a dreamy, wandering tone, "dying alone! it is sad."

"Nothing sadder," answered Robert.

"Yes," Rachel said, decidedly, "one thing worse: living alone, with a great grief that is yours in particular, a great wrong you can not undo, the memory of a great joy that you have lost, and lost forever. That would be worse."

Robert looked quickly up at his sister, took her hand in his, and kissed her tenderly. It was his fittest answer, and she felt its meaning. She was not alone now that a brother bore half her burden; not alone, too, because many a heart that Rachel in times of sorrow had comforted, and strengthened, and encouraged, now knew instinctively that she too was suffering, and offered love freely where it had been before so freely given. Not alone, because her noble, genuine nature, by a sort of touchstone attracted to itself whatever in surrounding society transcended the heartlessness and commonplace of life, and made her the centre of a circle of friends, in whose inmost souls she was enshrined as a warm sympathizer, a considerate adviser, a sure ally. Not alone, because after time had laid his healing hand on the dreadful wound—when the rugged edges of the ghastly past were overgrown, and soft moss and tender flower covered the blackened ruins—when agony became regret, and passionate sorrow sobered into faithful remembrance, Rachel again moved about her household ways, serene and

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humorous, with her keen wit, and energy, and courage, and became the ruling spirit of her home as of old, the suggester of schemes, the manager of pleasures, and yet, a strange problem! As the younger generation of brothers and sisters grew up round her, and found in her all matters of sentiment, that delicate sympathy, and ready appreciation which seems to bespeak experience; when one asked her counsel about some new step, and her consolation for some disappointment, and each found what they craved—often they wondered how it was that Rachel, with such passionate depths, such exquisite sensitiveness, such genial tenderness, such a warm heart and high spirit, should seem to view all such matters as if they existed for every one but herself; as if she stood outside the pale; as if her share in them were done—how was it, too, that now and then some expression escaped her that seemed as if life were nothing to her, a sigh of weariness, a look of despair, a pang of remembrance, a wish for death; a burst of melancholy suddenly surging up over the water's calm surface; a moan of wind heard afar in the still evening air; a shudder, as if something which always existed for her were sometimes suddenly revealed! How was it? A strange problem, indeed; and the answer to it might have been read in the note that lay, deep hid in the farthest recess of Rachel's desk, unopened still, as when Robert had given it to her that fatal afternoon.

THE END.

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